Mind as the foundation of cosmic order in Plato's late dialogues.

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MIND AS THE FOUNDATION OF COSMIC ORDER IN PLATO'S LATE DIALOGUES

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by

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ABSTRACT

In this thesis I wish to show the importance that the notion of god or a designing mind has in Plato's explanation of the sensible world as an orderly realm in the late dialogues. I offer an interpretation of mind as a foundation of cosmic order which shows it to have a coherent and economical place in the cosmologies of *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, *Politicus* and *Laws* X, and also to provide a useful or even indispensable background for these dialogues' ethical concerns.

Thus, I analyse the philosophical meaning of the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* which, I argue, is a symbol of a teleological kind of efficient causation constantly ordering the universe, and try to show that his mythological functions can be subsumed into the actual functions performed by the World-Soul in the structure of reality (e.g. in the *Timaeus* itself, *Philebus* and *Laws*). This hypothesis rests on a non-literal interpretation of pre-cosmic or a-cosmic disorder in the myths of *Timaeus* and *Politicus*.

Secondly, I investigate the relation between the divine or cosmic mind and human minds. I argue that god appears as a model for human behaviour: in the *Timaeus*, where the study of astronomy (i.e. the movements of the cosmic god) should be pursued by anyone wishing to be happy; in the *Philebus*, where the universe provides a model for the mixture between limit and unlimited that human beings should achieve; and in the *Politicus*, where god's concern for the universe in the myth should be taken as an example for the politician. In addition, I suggest that Plato's cosmological descriptions can be coloured by ethical and political preoccupations, so that, in the *Politicus*, the universe mythically appears as a projection of human life. I further explore the cosmic implications of human behaviour in the *Laws*, and how human souls as well as the World-Soul become responsible for cosmic order. In this way the thesis shows how the universe can not only act as a paradigm for human behaviour but also be enhanced by it as a true *kosmos*.

CONTENTS

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G.R.C.

TEXTS AND ABBREVIATIONS

The following works of **Plato** (with their corresponding abbreviations) are quoted, unless otherwise stated, according to the text established by John Burnet, *Platonis Opera*, Oxford 1900-7 (OCT):

Cratylus (*Crat.*)
Critias (*Crit.*)
Euthyphro (*Eut.*)
Gorgias (*Gorg.*)
Laws
Parmenides (*Parm.*)
Phaedo
Phaedrus
Philebus (*Phil.*)
Politicus (*Pol.*)
Protagoras (*Prot.*)
Republic (*Rep.*)
Sophist (*Soph.*)
Symposium (*Symp.*)
Theaetetus (*Theaet.*)
Timaeus (*Tim.*)

Translations of the text are my own unless otherwise stated. In transliterations from the Greek, the sign ^ has been used to indicate long vowels.

The following ancient texts (preceded by the abbreviations used here) have been quoted according to the editions listed below:

Aristotle:

De Caelo, ed. D.J. Allan, Oxford (OCT), 1936

G.C.= On Coming to Be and Passing Away (*De Generatione et Corruptione*), ed. H.H. Joachim, Oxford 1922

Metaph.= Metaphysica, ed. W. Jaeger, Oxford (OCT), 1957

P.A.= De Partibus Animalium, in *Aristotelis Opera* (vol. I), ed. B. Langkavel, Leipzig (Teubner) 1868

Pol. = *Politica*, ed. W.D. Ross, Oxford (OCT) 1957

Euripides:

Electra, in *Euripidis Fabulae* II, ed. J. Diggle, Oxford (OCT) 1981

Orestes, in *Euripidis Fabulae* III, ed. J. Diggle, Oxford (OCT) 1994

Hesiod, *Op.*= *Opera et Dies*, ed. F. Solmsen, Oxford (OCT), 1990 (3rd. edition)

[Olympiodorus], *Prol.*= *Anonymous Prolegomena to Platonic Philosophy*, ed. L.G. Westerink, Amsterdam, 1962

Philolaos, fragments (=B) in DK = H. Diels and W. Kranz (eds.), *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, vol. I, Berlin, 1951 (6th. edition)

Plotinus, *Enn.*= *Enneades* (I-VI), *Plotini Opera*, vols. I-III eds. P. Henry and H.R. Schwyzer, Oxford (OCT) 1964-82

Plutarch:

De an. proc. = *On the Generation of Soul in the Timaeus* (*De Animae Procreatione in Timaeo*), in *Plutarch's Moralia*, vol. XIII, part I, ed. H. Cherniss, London 1976

De Iside et Osiride, in *Plutarchi Moralia*, vol. II, ed. W. Sieveking, Leipzig (Teubner) 1971 (2nd. edition)

Proclus, *In Tim.* = *Procli Diadochi In Platonis Timaeum Commentaria*, vols. I-III, ed. E. Diehl, Leipzig (Teubner) 1903-6

Xenocrates, *Fragmente*, ed. R. Heinze, Hildesheim 1965

Other abbreviations:

LSJ = Liddell, H., Scott, R., Jones, H., *A Greek-English Lexicon*, repr. with suppl. Oxford, 1968

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

By comparison with the large amount of attention that Plato's epistemology, metaphysics and ethics have lately received on the part of contemporary scholars, his cosmological thought has been relatively neglected. This circumstance may partly be due to the fact that a great deal of it is presented in the way of myth (as in *Timaeus* and *Politicus*), or in dialogues, such as the *Philebus* and *Politicus*, where the cosmology could be just seen as a digression from, respectively, the ethical or political context in which it appears; or in a dialogue such as the *Laws*, a late and awkwardly long creation attracting serious consideration mainly for its political and ethical reflections. An aggravating factor is that notions such as that of god or a designing mind are considered not only unfashionable but also difficult to trace within a coherent philosophical line in the interpretation of Plato. However, I wish to argue that these notions are in fact crucial for an understanding of Plato's explanation of the sensible realm as an orderly realm in the dialogues mentioned, and that an interpretation of mind as a foundation of cosmic order in these dialogues can be rendered which is not only coherent and economical, but which also shows how their cosmologies provide a useful or even indispensable background for their ethical concerns. In this manner I undertake to establish an interpretation which stresses the interconnections between macro and microcosm, and so will contrast with the rather compartmentalized approach that cosmology has standardly received in recent studies.[1] By so doing I hope that a fresh picture of the cosmological Plato will emerge.

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[1] Compare e.g. T.M. Robinson (1970), Brisson (1974), Vlastos (1975), Ostenfeld (1982), Mohr (1985).

In this thesis, then, I purport to analyse to what extent and in what way "Mind" can be taken as a foundation of cosmic order in four of Plato's dialogues, namely the *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, *Politicus* and *Laws* (book X), which are generally thought to be late. Before sketching the strategy I want to follow in this analysis, I shall start by briefly explicating, in section 1, some concepts contained in the title in a way that may facilitate an understanding of some of the issues to be dealt with in this work. Afterwards, in section 2, I shall provide, by way of background, a brief outline of how I take the subject to be treated in some passages from dialogues other than the ones at stake here, before setting out, in section 3, the main argument and structure of my thesis. Finally in this introduction, I shall deal with two points of method: firstly, in section 4, my approach to the chronological order of the dialogues to be studied and, secondly, in section 5, the issue of the status of *muthos* in relation to *logos*.

I. COSMOS, MIND AND CAUSE

1. I am concerned with cosmic order; this then is basically a thesis about cosmology in late Plato. The word "*kosmos*" is particularly rich, since it can mean, among other things,[2] both universe and order, or, in one go, the universe as order.[3] But there is a *kosmos* or order not only of the universe, but also of the individual soul[4] and the *polis*.[5] Although my focus in this thesis will be mainly on the macrocosm or the order of the universe, a

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[2] Such as adornment (cf. e.g. *Rep.* II 373c1; also *Tim.* 40a6 which plays on the double meaning of 'universe' and 'adornment').
[3] Cf. *Gorg.* 508a. See also *Tim.* 28b2-3, *Pol.* 269d7-8 ("what we have called *ouranon kai kosmon*") for Plato's conscious use of the word "*kosmos*" in the sense of universe in cosmological contexts. Cf. also *infra*, ch. 4, n. 12.
[4] Cf. e.g. *Gorg.* 504b5, c2.
[5] Cf. *Prot.* 322c3.

concern for the microcosm will be present also, particularly with respect to its interaction with the macrocosm.

2. "Mind" is an ambiguous term in the title. It can suggest either, more narrowly, intellect (*nous*) or, more widely, soul (*psuchê*) in the Platonic terminology. However, one of the points I want to defend in this thesis is that, at the level of the universe, the two coincide, that is to say, the soul or kind of soul which is mainly responsible for cosmic order can be described exclusively in terms of intellect; *i.e.* without any irrational faculties, and in turn there is no intellect for Plato that is not at the same time soul. In addition, there is the question whether it is only mind or soul at a cosmic level that is responsible for cosmic order, or whether individual human souls can contribute to it. I shall be arguing for the latter possibility especially in chapter 7.

3. The talk about "foundation" suggests "cause" or "principle" in one way or another. So I shall be investigating: What kind of cause does Plato posit to account for the existing cosmic order? Is it only a generating cause or is it also a sustaining cause? Can we in both cases speak of "efficient" causality, to adopt terminology borrowed from Aristotelian interpreters but which could arguably be suggested by Plato's vocabulary itself?[6] I shall indeed be proposing here that it is an

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[6] Note that it is Plato himself who uses the expression *archê kinêseôs* (principle of motion) and relates it to soul in *Phaedrus* 245c9 and *Laws* X 895b3, cf. 896b1 (*kinêseôs aitia*). Note also the term *to poioun*, "the agent", at *Phil.* 26e7 (*to poioun kai to aition*, cf. 27a5), something that will correspond to *nous* at 30c-e. By efficient cause, then, I shall be meaning in general terms something active which can produce certain effects (cf. M. Frede [1980: 217-8]). See also *infra*, ch. 2, sections 1.1. and 1.3. It is worth noting that this wide terminology will allow us to encompass both mechanical causes, which merely transmit received motion, and primary causes which initiate motion as the proper *archê kinêseôs*, the latter corresponding to soul or mind. Cf. *infra* n. 7.

active cause teleologically oriented, and, in that respect, I shall be discussing what is the kind of goal pursued and where Forms or Ideas fit into this picture; and what other kind of cause, if any, is involved in bringing about or sustaining cosmic order, as well as what limits the causal role of Mind has to encounter in this process.

II. TOWARDS THE NOTION OF AN ORDERING COSMIC MIND

Now, I said that I intend to show that Mind acts as a "cause" (*aitia, aition*), in the late dialogues, a cause understood basically in terms of an agent,[7] so that our concern -as much as Plato's- will be with cause in an efficient sense in the late dialogues.[8] Understanding how

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[7] In the late dialogues that we are considering Plato refers to the agent of change indifferently as *aitia* or *aition,* so e.g. Plato expresses the principle that everything that becomes must do so by some *aition* in the *Timaeus* (28c2), or through some *aitia* in the *Philebus* (26e) which is identified with *to poioun* and *to aition* in the same passage -remitted to *nous* at 28a ff., esp. 30c5-6-, though the cause of generation is again called *aitia* at 23d7, 27a-b, 30a10, 30c5, 30d3. Moreover, Plato refers to the two kinds of cause in the *Timaeus* indifferently as *du' aitías eidê* at 68e6 and *tôn aitíôn genê* at 69a7 (each being productive of effects, 46d3, e1, 4, 6). The cause of the forward march of the universe in the *Politicus* is called *theia aitia* at 270a3, while the bodily is referred to as *aition* at 273b4; in *Laws* X soul is called both the *aition* (891e5) and the *aitia* (896b1) of motion. Therefore, we could not apply in these cases the distinction between *aition* (as the entity with causal role, like Anaxagoras' *nous* and Socrates' bones and sinews) and *aitia* (as the reason why or explanation, expressed propositionally) that M. Frede (1980: 223) tries to apply to *Phaedo* 96a ff.; though certainly in many cases *aitia* is more renderable as "reason why" than cause; e.g. at *Tim.* 29d7, where it is asked *di' hêntina aitian* the Framer has built the universe, and what follows is an explanation ("he was good... and so he wished everything to be maximally similar to himself", 29e1-3); at *Pol.* 294d1 we must find the *aitia* of the need of laws in a *polis*, and we are then given the reasons. In addition, I think that Plato's postulation of a cause, at the ontological level, in the cosmology of these four dialogues mentioned has explanatory force, so that here these two aspects become hardly dissociable.

[8] We know however that the meaning of *aitia* in Greek is much more general than "cause" in English (on this see Vlastos [1969a: 76-81], and LSJ *ad loc.*) and that the notion of cause in Greek philosophy has been used much more widely than in the sense of efficient cause, which seems however to be the prevailing sense in modern times (cf. Frede [1980: 217-8]; for a summary of the contemporary debate about

this cause works will provide us with an explanation, which is in this case a teleological explanation, insofar as that agent is a rational agent intending positive goals. The postulation of such an agent, then, will be Plato's way of accounting for the appearance of purpose and order in Nature.

The notion that there is some purpose in Nature, as oriented towards the Ideas, can already be found hinted at as early as the *Phaedo*, with the suggestion that sticks and stones wish and strive to be like the Idea (cf. *bouletai*, 74d9-10, *oregetai*, 75a2, b1, *prothumeitai*, 75b7).[9] A metaphorical language, at this stage, since nature hasn't yet been endowed with a mind that could account for such striving, and since Socrates in the dialogue declares himself to have been disappointed in his search for someone who could explain the cause of each thing by an appeal to a "demonic force" (*daimonian ischun*) or an intellect (*nous*) that orders the universe in the best possible state, as it now is (cf. 97b-98c - esp. 97b8-c6, 98b7-, 99c1-3, 99c8-9).[10] If we skip many pages of Plato's intellectual biography to have a look towards the end, that is precisely what we shall find in the *Laws*: "willing" (*boulesthai*) will be there, non-metaphorically, as one of the states of Soul leading the cosmos (X 897a1; cf. XII 967a4-5); the *Nous diakosmôn* is proudly proclaimed as the source of all beauties in heaven (cf. XII 966e2-4, 967b-d). By the time of the *Laws*, then, the striving of the sticks and stones in the

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causation cf. Sosa-Tooley [1993: 1-31], though there are still modern attempts to take "cause" in a wider sense than efficient cause; cf. Sosa [1980]).

[9] Certainly Plato emphasizes that these things fall short and cannot manage to be like the Equal itself, and stressing this inferiority is crucial for his argument for recollection in which the passage is inserted (cf. 74d9-e4, 74e9-75a2).

[10] Note that the statement at 99c1-2 seems to express a belief in teleological arrangement, by the suggestion that being in the best possible state is how things are now (*houtô nun keisthai*), even though Plato doesn't yet articulate an explanation or justification of that belief in terms of an ordering Mind.

Phaedo will have found a cosmological foundation and the Anaxagorean *Nous* a proper place in Plato's ontology. There is however a journey from the *Phaedo* to the *Laws* that I cannot pretend to analyse comprehensively here; though perhaps some brief glimpses can be provided by glancing at suggestions found in different dialogues (other than the four that will be studied in detail), by way of background to my main thesis.

Despite Socrates' dissatisfaction with Pre-Socratic accounts in the *Phaedo*, including Anaxagoras', the allusion to a *Nous diakosmôn* shows that the idea was already present in Plato's mind, and dialogues like the *Symposium* show again an interest in teleological explanations. When Diotima asks Socrates "What do you think is the *aition* of this love and desire" to procreate? (207a6-7), and when Socrates asks to be told this *aitia* (207c7), what we are given is a teleological account: "Mortal nature seeks, as far as possible, to exist always and be immortal (*aei te einai kai athanatos*). But it can only be so by generation" (207d1-3). Procreation thus becomes a means towards a goal, and the question why does love exist can be rendered as 'for what sake does love exist', the goal being participation in immortality (208b2-6: *thnêton athanasias metechei*, cf. *athanasias charin*).[11] Love thus becomes an impulse in humans and animals, seeking a -conscious or unconscious- goal (cf. 207b-c). Now, it is strictly speaking the Idea (of Beauty) that will be described as *aei on* (211a1) at the end of Diotima's discourse: In addition, "Beauty itself...is always specifically one, whereas all the other beautiful things participate in it" (211b1-3) -and beautiful things are the object of love, insofar as we desire to procreate in them (206e); so that striving for immortality can be taken to be -probably in an

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11 As L. Wright (1976: 24) says, it belongs to teleological explanations that when we say "A in order that B", or "A for the sake of B", we *ipso facto* answer a question of the form "Why A".

unconscious and indirect way for most humans- striving to be like the Idea. Some hints, moreover, are made at the binding force of *erôs*, which, by being in between (*metaxu*, 202d11) human beings and gods, "fills in the gap in the middle of them, so that the whole becomes united with itself" (*en mesôi de on amphoterôn sumplêroi, hôste to pan auto hautôi sundedesthai*, 202e6-7). Love performs a *sundein* similar to the one that Plato was in the *Phaedo* expecting Anaxagoras' Mind to perform[12] and a mediating function that anticipates the one which in later dialogues (such as the *Timaeus*) Plato will attribute to soul.[13]

By the time of the *Republic* love is described as a state of the soul, which in the case of the philosopher is directed towards contemplation of the Ideas (VI 485a10-b3);[14] the philosopher will, in turn, possess the mind that will be able to order, if not the whole cosmos, at least the state after the pattern of the Ideas: "By seeing the Good and using it as a paradigm, they must

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[12] Cf. 99c1-6: materialistic accounts "do not look for the *dunamis* of things now being disposed in the best posible way they can be arranged (*tethênai*), nor do they think that it has a demonic force (*daimonian ischun*)", but they think there is an Atlas more powerful (*ischuroteron*), more immortal and more cohesive (*mallon sunechonta*); not realizing that in fact it is the good and fitting *(to agathon kai deon*) that binds and keeps things together (*sundein kai sunechein*). This passage seems to attribute the cohesive function first, more anthropomorphically, to a demonic force (*daimonian ischun*) than which in fact, Plato implies, no Atlas can be found more cohesive (*sunechonta*); secondly, to the good. Since in the end it would be *nous* that was expected to "dispose each thing in the best posible way" (*hekaston tithenai tautêi hopêi an beltista echêi*, 97c5-6), one would expect that the good and cohesive structure of the cosmos is the result of *nous* ordering, which also performs a cohesive function. This duality of factors in explaining the unity and cohesiveness of the cosmos will reappear in the *Timaeus*, where the *sundein* is said to belong both to the Demiurge (32b-c), and to the *analogia* imposed by him (31c). Cf. also the hesitation in the *Philebus* about attributing the role of realizing symmetry both to *peras* and to *nous* as cause as we shall analyse *infra*, ch. 4, section 5.3. (Cf. a similar *sunechein* said to be performed in the cosmos by *philia*, *sôphrosunê*, justice and geometrical equality in *Gorg.* 507e6-508a8.)

[13] Cf. the World-Soul as an intermediate entity at *Tim.* 35a1-b1.

[14] Cf. the same role of *stergein* at 485c4, of *oregesthai* at 485d4, and of *epithumiai* at 485d6-e1.

kosmein the *polis*, the citizens and themselves" (VII 540a8-b1); in this way the philosopher is called a *dêmiourgos* of virtue in his fellow-citizens -and thus of the goodness of the whole city (cf. VI 500d). But, what about the whole cosmos?

Plato, we must remember, had shown, through Socrates, initial enthusiasm in the *Phaedo* about a Mind which could account for the good arrangement of the totality of things, despite later disappointment at the mechanical way Anaxagoras proceeded to explain each individual phenomenon (cf. 98b-c). But soon in the *Republic* we find allusions to a *dêmiourgos* of our sight (VI 507c), who has also framed the heaven -and things in it- "in as beautiful a way as is possible for such works to be framed" (VII 530a5-7), *i.e.* a designing agent who would have taken care not only of the universe as a whole but also of individual phenomena. Plato doesn't expand on the cosmological significance of this *dêmiourgos*; we shall have to wait till the late dialogues for that. However, the notion that cosmic order and beauty has its foundation in some sort of design starts becoming explicit here.

The idea of an ordering mind appears also in the *Phaedrus*, where the soul of god -mainly, Zeus- is mythically invested with the Anaxagorean function of *diakosmein panta* (246e), and, despite its traditional face, it is described with particular emphasis on its noetic aspect (cf. *nous, dianoia* 247c-d) which feeds on the contemplation of the Ideas. Zeus, in turn, appears as a model to be imitated by any human with capacity for wisdom and government (252d-e, esp. 252e1-3), and the gods in general are portrayed as leaders that the human souls follow towards contemplation of the Ideas (246e-247a, 248a). In the same dialogue, and in the *logos* preceding this *muthos*, Plato presents an argument (245c5-

246a2) for the immortality of soul that postulates it as ungenerated principle of all motion, including therefore bodily motion, and it is argued that without that principle the whole *ouranos* would stand still (245d8-e2), an argument which in that way emphasizes the sustaining aspect of this generative cause. By this appeal to soul as *archê kinêseôs* Plato seems to have found a more articulated way of expressing efficient causation, and to advance a more friendly relation between soul and body (than that which we might find, say, in the *Phaedo*), since now it looks as if the essence of soul consists precisely in moving or animating body (cf. *Phaedrus* 245e4-6). This idea seems to recur in other later dialogues, so that, rather than an obstacle (*empodion to sôma, Phaedo* 65a10, cf. 66c1), the body will become mainly a vehicle (*ochêma*) for the soul (cf. *Tim.* 41e2, 69c7),[15] not only as its place of residence (even in its most blessed imaginable state)[16] but also as the instrument of the purposive action of intelligent souls.[17]

That motion is inherent to soul is again restated in the *Sophist* (249a-b), in the context of a passage (245e-249d) where the Eleatic Stranger argues for an intermediate position (cf. 249c10-d5) between those who contend that reality amounts to bodies and those who claim that it consists only of incorporeal immutable forms (246a4-c3); he tries to get the former to agree that qualities in soul, such as *phronêsis*, are *asômata* (247b1-d1), and argues with respect to the latter that full being (*to*

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[15] The contrast with the *Phaedo* is still noteworthy whether one posits a difference of view or just of stress between the two outlooks on the body outlined above. It is certainly clear that the body could also act as a hindrance to human fulfilment in the *Timaeus* (cf. 88b in relation with 90b), and that it had the status of a necessary condition in the *Phaedo* (99a-b); however, in the *Phaedo* it was not elevated to the rank of cause nor was it shown as an indispensable company for soul. Cf. also *infra*, ch. 2, section 1.3; ch. 3, section 1; ch. 7 section 1.

[16] Cf. *Tim.* 41d-e, 42b, 90a.

[17] Cf. e.g. *Tim.* 68e with 46c-e, *Laws* X 897a-b.

pantelôs on) must equally include *nous* and *phronêsis*, and therefore life, soul and motion (248e6-b6).[18] In this way *phronêsis* would seem to be the bridge between the two camps: if both of them agree that it exists, then there is a kind of reality that is *incorporeal* (*pace* the sheer materialist) *and* in motion (*pace* the friends of the forms). Plato's interest in bridging the gap in this way seems no accident, when we find that in his later cosmology soul, especially intelligent soul, will precisely exhibit a mediating function between the corporeal and mutable and the incorporeal and immutable (cf. e.g. *Tim.* 35a1-b1). This is particularly true in the *Timaeus* of the World-Soul, and even though the *Sophist* doesn't contain any explicit reference to this kind of entity, still towards the end (265b-266b) we find some promising cosmological suggestions.[19] The generation of all living creatures, plants and the four elements is attributed to a divine productive art (*theia poiêtikê technê*, cf. 265a10-11 with e3) in which god acts as a demiurge (*theou dêmiourgountos*, 265c4) and which can be rendered as "a divine cause operating with reason and knowledge" (*[aitias] meta logou te kai epistêmês theias*, 265c8-9). This kind of efficient cause is posited as an alternative to the widespread view which favours rather "a spontaneous cause which produces without thought"

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[18] One should note that this is not a suggestion that intelligible forms must in some way move (as interpreted e.g. by de Vogel [1970: 228-9]), but rather that full being must include *not only* immutable entities but also mutable ones (see esp. 249c10-d5); cf. Dorter (1994: 147-8), De Rijk (1986: 17-8, 106). Let us note in addition that the Stranger has *not* got the friends of the forms to agree (i) with the criterion of being as power to act or be acted upon (they say that is a mark not of being, but of becoming, 248c); (ii) that for forms to be known involves a *poiêma* or *pathos* (248d-e); even though they do agree that forms are known and that there is a knowing soul (248d1-2). So it would seem that *phronêsis* is a more likely candidate than the concept of *dunamis* (as power to act or be acted upon) to mediate in the discussion (*pace* Dorter [1994: 144], McCabe [1994: 202-5]). For further discussion of *Soph.* 245e-249d cf. e.g. Cornford (1935: 242-8); Runciman (1962: 76-82); Seligman (1974: 30-40); Bluck (1975: 89-102); Teloh (1981: 190-1, 194-5); Malcolm (1983); Prior (1985: 129-39); De Rijk (1986: 13-7, 106); Dorter (1994: 142-50).

[19] On this passage compare the treatment of Brague (1991).

(*aitias automatês kai aneu dianoias phuousês*) or so-called "nature" (*phusis*) (265c7-8, 265e3). This debate with materialistic theories as to the true cause in cosmological explanations and Plato's defence of design will become a motif reappearing in *Timaeus, Philebus* and *Laws*. In these two latter works, as we shall see, it is intelligent soul, especially the World-Soul, that will present itself as the primary *aitia* instead of any random or automatic materialistic force.

This brief survey can then serve as a background against which we can start to explore the dialogues that will be the subject of this study. Let me now present the main claims I want to submit about *Timaeus, Philebus, Politicus* and *Laws* and outline the structure of the thesis.

III. THE ARGUMENT AND STRUCTURE OF THIS THESIS

In this thesis I shall be arguing that *nous* as foundation of cosmic order is to be understood basically in terms of a primary efficient cause operating teleologically within certain limits. I shall try to show how the contrast between random and purposive factors in the explanation of cosmic order is taken up and developed in *Timaeus, Politicus, Philebus* and *Laws,* and how, nonetheless, teleology is made to rely on mechanism. In this regard I wish to show how the mythological figure of the Demiurge -as it appears especially in the *Timaeus*, cf. also *Politicus*- can be understood in the light of the functions of the Soul at a cosmic level or World-Soul (defended more argumentatively in *Philebus* and *Laws*, but also present in *Timaeus* and *Politicus*), acting as primary cause in a perpetual universe. In this way the prevalence of complete random disorder in it will turn out to be a merely hypothetical postulate, though an actual possibility at the human and political level. This latter

circumstance will make us reflect on how the universe can act both as a model for human behaviour and be enhanced by it as a true *kosmos*.

From this analysis I shall try to show that we do not need a separate intellect apart from the one embodied in the universe and heavenly bodies (what I call cosmic god/s) as primary cause of order at a cosmic level, even though, as much as we do not need a separate *nous*, we do need the cosmic god for the achievement of microcosmic order. In addition, we shall see how the cosmological description itself can sometimes be affected by ethical concerns. In this way Plato's interest in the macrocosm will reveal itself as not being independent of his preoccupations with the microcosm.

In my first chapter on the *Timaeus* (chapter 2 following this introduction), I shall analyse in what sense the Demiurge appears mythically as the source of cosmic order, and shall attempt to uncover the philosophical meaning of that mythical postulation in terms of Plato's assertion of cosmic teleology, in the light of which the Demiurge appears as a symbol of the notion of primary causality. Secondly, I shall scrutinize whether the Demiurge deserves any ontological status within the structure of reality of the *Timaeus*, and argue (on the grounds of a previous rejection of interpretations of creation as a punctual act) that it should be taken as standing not for a separate *nous* but for the World-Soul. In showing how these two aspects are indispensably related, I shall oppose those views which have taken the Demiurge to symbolize *exclusively* one or the other. As to the topic of creation, which has divided interpreters mainly between those who take the *gegone* at 28b7 literally or metaphorically, I shall be suggesting the *via media* that it can be meant literally but only partially so, since Plato also wants to say that the universe not only has been created, but is and will be so

if we take creation as a perpetual and beginningless process.

That we do not need more than soul at a cosmic level (World-Soul and soul of the heavenly bodies, "cosmic god" in the collective sense) to mediate between Ideas and sensibles in the *Timaeus* will be shown not only from a metaphysical perspective but also from an ethical one. Thus, chapter 3 starts by picking up some conclusions about god in chapter 2 by showing how the predicate "god" is actually applied to the World-Soul and the heavenly bodies in the *Timaeus*. This cosmic god will be distinguished from what stands immediately above and below it in Plato's structure of reality, namely the Ideas and human reason respectively, in order to show in particular the relation of the latter to the cosmic god. I shall be arguing that the astronomically ordered universe provides a model of behaviour that we should follow, and I shall press the matter further by stressing the ethical function that such an abstract discipline as astronomy performs in the *Timaeus* by directly contributing towards human happiness.

In chapter 4, on the *Philebus*, I shall analyse the fourfold classification at 23c-30e, which I take to be cosmological, and the relation between *peras* and *apeiron* as constituents of things pertaining to the sensible realm and the Mind that is posited as "cause" in that passage; then I shall compare it with the cosmology of the *Timaeus* to see up to what extent the two cosmologies can be read as complementary, or as shedding light on one another. This comparison, which I shall attempt in terms different from the standard ones, will help reinforce the cosmological import of the passage. We shall also see that the *Philebus* enunciates a macro-microcosm parallelism which marks the affinity and at the same time the difference between human minds and Cosmic Mind (or minds), insofar as the former, being of inferior pedigree

to the latter, still need to -and therefore might not- create in their lives, by imitation of the latter, a mixture which is already achieved in the universe.

Now, as I shall be trying to show, it seems to be one of the strongest suggestions in several of Plato's dialogues that the universe is orderly due to the presence of a governing *Nous*, *i.e.* that Mind is the foundation of the cosmos in its present state. Discursive dialogues such as the *Philebus* and the *Laws* contain this evidence, as does the myth of the *Timaeus*, which ends with an appraisal of the beauty and completeness of the present cosmos. However, a chapter has to be devoted to examining whether that can also be maintained with regard to the myth of the *Politicus*. This is no idle question, for most of the existent literature -and virtually the whole of the English literature to my knowledge- has assumed Plato to maintain the contrary thesis here, namely that we are not living in an orderly universe under the presence of a guiding god. Even though, in a subsequent chapter, I shall present a non-literal reading of that myth, I think it is still important that literalists and non-literalists should, if possible, at least come to an agreement as to which reading of the myth is more suitable even if it is solely attached to the letter of the myth, for in that case the thesis proposed in my title, namely that Mind is the foundation of the -present- cosmic order, becomes more powerful by being sustainable under both readings.

The non-literal reading of the myth of the *Politicus* which I want to submit in chapter 6, after having established, in chapter 5, what I believe to be the most appropriate literal reading of the myth, is one which, in the first place, takes into account the elements of cosmological importance that we can find in it, but, in a second instance, takes us much further than its

cosmological meaning towards disclosing, within that background, its anthropological and political significance. Firstly, I wish to argue, as in chapter 2 with regard to the *Timaeus*, that Mind can be taken to be not only the cause of the present cosmic order but of cosmic order at all times, and show the implausibility of a picture of the universe undergoing alternating prevalence of order and disorder. I also think that the myth contains interesting suggestions about the nature of divine Mind as cause -which are parallel to its treatment in other dialogues- and furthermore, as a model for the mind of the politician. So I will go on to analyse why the macro-microcosm parallelism is as exaggerated as it appears to be in the myth of the *Politicus*, and show how the behaviour of the universe and its relation to god in the literal picture of that myth become rather a symbol and projection of human and political affairs, the real sphere where actual "drama" between good and evil could according to my view plausibly exist.

Now, if chapter 6 serves to show how Plato's ethical and political preoccupations can tinge his own way of depicting the universe, so that it becomes a projection of the former, chapter 7, on *Laws* X, explores further that direction of thought by analysing up to what extent cosmic disorder can itself be said to have a human source. This question has to be established after answering the preliminary question in what sense could Plato possibly posit in the *Laws* not only Mind or a Good Soul as the foundation of cosmic order -as we could reasonably expect at this stage- but also -and surprisingly- an "Evil Soul" as the cause of disorder, and what status and scope of action could the latter have. In this respect I propose to dismiss any dualistic interpretation of Plato's *Laws* which posits the coexistence of two opposing cosmic principles, and present a reading of *Laws* X which emphasizes the existence of teleology as having its foundation in god at

a cosmic astronomical level and also at the level of cosmic justice as a framework for human behaviour. As far as human choice and responsibility is concerned, however, I wish to show that teleology is not something given but a task to be achieved by human souls, since they (and it would in *Laws* X appear only they) can be cause of evil - though they can also be cause of good- and so it is an open enterprise for them to contribute to cosmic teleology. In this regard, particular stress will be laid on the cosmic importance of human action, and so we shall see how human minds, as much as Cosmic Mind, will in the *Laws* become prominent in our search for a foundation of cosmic order that inspired the title of the present thesis.

IV. THE ORDER OF THE DIALOGUES

I hope to show that we can understand Plato as a philosopher who has, if not necessarily consistent theses throughout his career, at least consistent *preoccupations* as far as some central subjects of this thesis are concerned. I am not, however, making essential claims about chronology; I am content with the general agreement that *Phaedo, Symposium* and *Republic* are to be taken as middle dialogues, coming before the *Parmenides*; whereas the *Theaetetus, Sophist, Politicus, Philebus, Timaeus* and *Laws* are usually thought to be late.[20] Which dialogue comes before which in each group, particularly the

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[20] The *Phaedrus,* for its part, is usually regarded as more or less transitional between the middle and late period (see e.g. Eggers Lan [1992: esp. 46]; White [1993: 3-7]; Nehamas and Woodruff [1995: xlv-xlvi]). For defenders of its place in the late group cf. Rowe (1992a: esp. 39), who however doesn't underplay the *Phaedrus*' relation with the middle dialogues and remains agnostic about its relation with the *Timaeus*; and T.M. Robinson (1995: xiv), who places the *Phaedrus* after the *Timaeus* and *Politicus*. However, Robinson's main motivation for so doing is his belief that the *Timaeus* doesn't yet contain the theory of soul as principle of motion that we find in the *Phaedrus*; a point with which I shall take issue below (cf. ch. 2, section 1.3 and n. 44, section 2.2.2 and n. 81).

latter, is not a crucial concern for my thesis; rather I wish to show that there is, in the last four dialogues mentioned, some closeness in spirit as to cosmological issues that could be supported by, or support, closeness in date.

We do know, however, that the *Politicus* (284b) mentions the *Sophist*, so that it seems to be meant to be read after, or at least with reference to the latter. Aristotle, for his part, reports the *Laws* as post-dating the *Republic* (*Pol.* II 5-6, 1264b24-9), and in fact there is general modern consensus -which corresponds to the Ancient tradition-[21] that it is the work that occupied Plato till more or less the end of his life. Now, the relative dating of the *Timaeus* was certainly a hot issue some decades ago, particularly with Owen's proposal that it antedates the *Parmenides* and Cherniss' riposte, to which Owen did not reply.[22] Since then, few defenders have been found of Owen's thesis,[23] the main one perhaps having been, till recently, T.M. Robinson, though he too has now changed his mind by placing the *Timaeus* early in the late group, rather than at the end of the middle group.[24] The *Philebus* too, in turn, seems nowadays generally regarded as late.[25] [26]

V. LOGOS AND MUTHOS

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[21] Cf. e.g. [Olympiodorus], *Prol.* 24 10-15 (Westerink).
[22] Cf. Owen (1953); Cherniss (1957).
[23] For further criticism of Owen's thesis based partly on his own later views cf. Fine (1988a: 373-90).
[24] Cf. the Introduction in T.M. Robinson (1995: xiv-xv).
[25] The only exception perhaps being Waterfield (1980), (1982: 11), who questioned the general opinion about the lateness of the *Philebus*, though his method has been criticized by Benitez (1989: 2-3) -cf. also Hampton (1990: 8)- and has not gained support in the scholarly literature.
[26] Note that the latest stylometric studies, Brandwood (1990: 249-51), (1992: 113) and Ledger (1989: 198-206) agree in placing the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus* as late dialogues; though Ledger puts the *Timaeus* and *Critias* as the last dialogues, immediately preceded by the *Laws*. For a cautionary note on stylometry see e.g. T.M. Robinson (1992: esp. 381-2).

Two of the dialogues I shall be concerned with (namely, the *Politicus* and the *Timaeus*) deal with cosmology by way of myth. Much has been written on *logos* and *muthos* in Plato,[27] and several scholars have already emphasized that Platonic myths, as opposed to popular myths, are susceptible to philosophical analysis,[28] and that, far from being immersed in a popular or pre-logical way of thinking (such as that studied by anthropologists interested in myth),[29] or just uncritically incorporating the mythological tradition he inherits, Plato, though often appealing to the authority of tradition, mostly creates myths as his own fiction and *uses* them for rational purposes, even claiming a content of truth in them.[30] *Muthos* and *logos* can be two different ways of expressing philosophical ideas.[31] If this is so, *muthos*

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[27] Cf. Brisson (1982), Annas (1982), Gaiser (1984), Mattéi (1988), and the bibliographies in Gaiser and Brisson, including other works referred to below.

[28] See particularly Annas (1982: 119-20, 122); compare with Gaiser (1984: 127).

[29] For discussion of this kind of myth, with reference to Lévi-Bruhl, cf. Lévi-Strauss (1973: 25-8, 65).

[30] Cf. Frutiger (1930: 34), Brisson (1982: 144-51, 171), Gaiser (1984: 127). See e.g. *Gorg.* 523a for the claim of truth, and 527a, where Plato opposes any view of his story as "myth" in a pejorative sense of "old-wives' tale". In the *Timaeus* too Plato is not unwilling to use the word 'true' in connection with his probable account (cf. 30b8, 38a1).

[31] E.g., the idea of the immortality of the soul, which is subject to both argument and myth in the *Phaedo* and *Republic* (on this see Annas [1982]); or, as we can see from the survey above and as I shall argue further, the philosophical notion of a *Nous diakosmôn*, which appears mythically in the *Timaeus* (cf. also *Phaedrus* 246e4-7 together with 246b6 and 247c-d), and argumentatively in *Philebus* and *Laws* (so that one should not suppose, as McCabe does [1992: 60-7], that *muthos* contradicts *logos* as far as Plato's interest in this notion is concerned). Cf. also *Gorg.* 526d-527a where the conclusions extracted from the myth coincide with the conclusions extracted through argument (e.g. at 508b-509a) summarized at 527a-e. Likewise, Plato has Socrates say in the *Phaedo* after framing a myth on immortality, that one shouldn't stick too strictly to *how* he describes things in myth (cf. *tauta diischurisasthai houtôs echein...ou prepei*, 114d1-2), though it is appropriate to believe *that* some such description is the case, since the soul is immortal (cf. 114d2-6), something that has been subject to argument before. In other words, even though we are recommended not to attach too much credibility to all the details of a myth, there is still some basic philosophical idea or ideas it tries to express which should be taken seriously. And it is at least

and *logos* should be seen not antagonistically but complementarily:[32] *muthos* can prove important in understanding Plato's argument,[33] and Plato's arguments can help us interpret a myth.

If this is so, I do agree with Annas that a philosophical myth, as opposed to a popular myth,[34] should admit of some rational interpretation.[35] But the question then arises by what criteria should we undertake that kind of interpretation. A first criterion has already been advanced: trying to understand the relevance of the myth and the particular contribution it can make with regard to the argument of the dialogue; Plato can make that purpose explicit, as is the case with the *Politicus* myth,[36] though sometimes -or often- the richness of the myth displays, to closer analysis, some significance that goes much further or deeper than its *prima facie* lesson;

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here where the content of truth alleged for a myth (cf. n. 30) could lie.

[32] Cf. Rist (1964: 9-13); Gaiser (1984: 133, 134-5); Mattéi (1988: 67). When Plato refers to his myth as a *logos* (*Gorg.* 523a2; cf. the indifferent use of *eikos muthos* and *eikos logos* in the *Timaeus,* 29d2, 30b7; and perhaps also *Pol.* 277b-c as noted by R. Wright [1979: 368]), we can see that *muthos* is a kind of *logos* in a wide sense (something that shows that not even Plato thinks of the distinction so sharply, cf. also Zaslavski [1981: 220]), though they are still opposed to argumentative discourse or *logos* in a narrow sense (cf. e.g. *Phaedo* 61b3-7). On this see Brisson (1982: 110-13); also *Rep.* II 376e3-377a8, where Plato distinguishes two kinds of *logoi*, true and false, the latter being *muthos* -though he still insists that there, even though false as a whole, the myth he wants to make use of contains also some truth (377a5-6; contrast this with the myths of the poets which he takes as bad lies at 377d-e).

[33] Cf. Annas (1982: 119-20). I hope to be showing so particularly in chapter 6. In addition, though following rational purposes, myths seem a kind of discourse particularly suitable to spur the emotional side of the reader and through this bring him to further rational awareness. Cf. Blank (1993: 428 ff.) for the general issue of Plato's use of emotional effect. For views on the emotional aspect appealed to by myths cf. Stewart (1960: 29); Brisson (1982: 100-5 with 151).

[34] It is the latter that do not seem to deserve the effort of interpretation (*Phaedrus* 229b-e) and whose lack of overt edifying message Plato explicitly opposes (cf. *Rep.* II 378d-e). Cf. Annas (1982: 121); Gadamer (1980: 43, 67).

[35] Annas (1982: 119-20).

[36] See e.g. 275b and *infra*, ch. 6, section 2.2. Cf. also *Gorg.* 522e.

a deeper meaning that can still be discovered with the help of the discursive context of the dialogue.[37]

Now, when we go into a more detailed interpretation of a myth we become particularly sensitive to the fact that Platonic myths tend to be a peculiar kind of discourse, since together with features which are characteristically mythical (e.g. the narrative instead of argumentative order, the appeal to items or events which for Plato are beyond present verification by our senses or intellect, such as legendary figures, or events placed in a remote past or in the after-life)[38] Plato makes use of notions which also appear as object of argumentative treatment in other contexts in the same or different dialogues. Such is the case, for example, with the Ideas (alluded to mythically in the *Politicus* at 269d), the World-Body and the World-Soul (which appear in the myth of the *Politicus* and *Timaeus* but also in the macro-microcosm analogy argument of *Philebus*), or, in general, the allusion to a *Nous diakosmôn,* that has appeared in section 2 to be subject both of mythical and argumentative treatment.[39] This circumstance can give us a further clue, in the sense that, if we see Plato in a myth employing some notions that also appear in non-mythical and more argumentative related discourses, then perhaps we should not underestimate the philosophical importance of those elements even if they are in a mythical context. If this is so then we should be entitled to take some parts of a myth more seriously than others (particularly when we find internal contradiction within the same myth, or at least the possibility of contradictory readings). This becomes particularly important in the case of the *Timaeus*

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[37] This has been shown by Sedley (1991: 359-83, cf. esp. 383) with regard to the final myth of the *Phaedo*, and I shall try to do so as regards the *Politicus* myth *infra,* chapter 6. One could then apply here the suggestion that Plato's openness where it is found can constitute an invitation to the reader to participate in the dialogue (cf. Sayre [1992:236], Burnyeat [1990: 2-3], Zaslavski [1981: 219]).
[38] Cf. the analysis of Brisson (1982: 29, 139-44, 161-3, 171); also Gaiser (1984: 126), Frutiger (1930: 33).
[39] Cf. also *supra,* note 31.

myth, which is referred to by Plato both as an *eikos muthos* and an *eikos logos* (29d2, 30b7), and which more than any other myth introduces passages which look rather more like *logoi* in the strict sense, by appealing to statements which for Plato are verifiable at present or liable to be demonstrated (e.g. the twofold ontological distinction at 27d-28a, or the deduction that all bodies should be made out of triangles at 53c ff.).[40] And, even though some readings of a myth can be more literal than others, as we shall find is the case with the *Timaeus*, literalists themselves would not disagree that some details are merely fanciful.[41]

In this respect, I endorse the view that we should not privilege myth above argument,[42] and I propose that if a detail of a myth contradicts something that Plato says in a more argumentative context, then that would provide us with a *prima facie* reason for not taking that mythical detail literally. In this way *muthos* should be subordinated to *logos*.[43]

In addition, as I shall suggest, it is a sign of richness rather than a defect that myths can be open to more than one reading (we couldn't expect otherwise given their symbolic nature);[44] however, that doesn't exempt us from the task of assessing, in the face of different interpretations of the same myth, or of particular issues posed in a myth, which interpretation (i) makes most sense of the myth in the light of the argument of the

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[40] The latter having been taken to belong rather to the domain of *dianoia* or mathematical knowledge (Ashbaugh [1988: 14-5]); cf. also Frutiger (1930: 38), who excludes 27d-29c and 51b-52d from what he regards as mythical.

[41] Such as for example the *kratêr* in which the Demiurge mixes the components or residues of the World-Soul at 41d. Cf. Vlastos (1939: 381 n.1).

[42] Annas (1982: 121).

[43] For another defence of this subordination of *muthos* to *logos* and that this is the way Plato himself views myth cf. Brisson (1982: esp. 110).

[44] Cf. Frutiger (1930: 103).

dialogue in which the myth is inserted,[45] and (ii) is most coherent and makes the text under consideration most philosophically coherent.

In this regard, I agree with some modern hermeneutic studies that a presupposition of intelligibility is indispensable for any interpretation of a text.[46] Now, this text usually appears in a context,[47] and so the whole dialogue can act as context for a particular passage, and sometimes other dialogues can serve as context for one particular dialogue.[48] Even though of course priority will be given to internal evidence in a dialogue, that will not exclude further corroboration (as to similar points) from other dialogues when that is available. In this dissertation I attempt to show that the four late dialogues to be studied can be taken as illuminatory of each other at least as far as certain cosmological issues are concerned, and that they can collectively strengthen our understanding of Plato's late cosmological thought.[49]

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[45] Of course this applies when there happens to be argument apart from the myth, something that will be the case in the *Politicus* though not so much in the *Timaeus*, though, as I said, several passages look more argumentative within that myth itself.

[46] Cf. Gadamer (1975: 261). Intelligibility presupposes coherence, and this is not far from Socrates' recommendations that our thoughts should accord with one another (cf. *Gorg.* 482b-c). Let us note also the suggestions that philosophical dialogue is done not just for the sake of argument but for the sake of some truth which is a goal to be found (cf. e.g. *Phil.* 14b; on this general issue see the illuminating treatment of Tigerstedt [1977: 101-3]). I am not however making the claim that consistency of thought must be presupposed throughout Plato's life. But if we see one view being defended in one dialogue, and *prima facie* a different view on the same subject in another dialogue, then we have to investigate why Plato might be speaking differently on the same matter and account for those supposed changes (e.g. by postulating difference of emphasis or aspect, chronological developments, difference of intended audience, etc.). Cf. e.g. Rowe (1992b: 65-7), Kraut (1984: 12).

[47] On this see Ricoeur (1970).

[48] Cf. Irwin (1988: 196). An example would be those cases where Plato seems to maintain the same thesis (e.g. his critique of materialistic theories of nature) through the mouths of various different main speakers, such as Timaeus in the *Timaeus*, Socrates in the *Philebus*, the Eleatic Stranger in the *Sophist* and the Athenian Stranger in the *Laws*.

[49] There is the legitimate question up to what extent the arguments in the dialogues reflect Plato's own voice. M. Frede (1992) has

recently addressed this issue, but I find his position rather too agnostic. He claims for example that it is not clear whether Plato fully identifies himself with the main character of a dialogue, such as Socrates, since Plato distanced himself from many standardly Socratic positions, such as lack of interest in metaphysics and disapproval of natural philosophy (204-5); but at this point Frede is overriding the difference that he himself is trying to draw between the historical Socrates and the fictional Socrates. In fact the latter appears, in dialogues such as the *Philebus*, wholeheartedly endorsing cosmological and metaphysical arguments (cf. e.g. *Phil.* 28c-30d, 58a). If the dramatic figure, such as Socrates in the *Philebus*, endorses a view that the historical Socrates didn't, then it rather argues against Frede, since the new views put in Socrates' mouth -at least to the extent to which they coincide with similar views expressed by different speakers in other dialogues, cf. note 48- most probably come from Plato. Furthermore, Frede's claim that Plato "had a critical distance" towards Socrates (204) presupposes that there is something like Plato's views that we *can* pick up from his dialogues. Frede also suggests that the question-and-answer format makes the argument belong more to the respondent than to the questioner, since it is the former who says yes or no (205-6); however, this is to overlook the fact that the questioner often supports the answer if it is right, something indispensable for the argument to proceed or to finish (cf. e.g. *Soph.* 265d5, *Phil.* 29d1, 6; not to mention the *Laws*, e.g. X 896b-c). The main speaker sometimes even speaks to or criticizes the interlocutor from a position of authority (cf. *Pol.* 263d-e); and at other times it is the main speaker who advances a thesis and the respondent who supports it (cf. *Phil.* 29e, 67a-b), and, at further times, it is the minor interlocutor who asks questions that the main speaker can answer (cf. e.g. *Pol.* 274e, 294a-b). And even though Frede distinguishes between aporetic (mainly Socratic) and non-aporetic dialogues, his account does not seem to pay sufficient attention to the latter before making general claims about Plato's dialogues (without, unfortunately, providing us with specific textual scrutiny). For a position critical of Frede's cf. Irwin (1995: 7-8 and 355 n. 10). For the suggestion that the main interlocutor of many late dialogues is presented "with the authority of the expert teacher" compare Gaiser (1984: 43), cf. a similar defence of the same point, that includes reference to *Philebus* and *Politicus*, by Sayre (1992: 221 ff.), and particularly as regards the *Politicus* by Miller (1980: xii-xix).
For further discussion on how to read Plato cf. the essays contained in Griswold (1988), and especially Irwin (1988: 199), Kraut (1988: 177).

CHAPTER 2

THE DEMIURGE, CAUSE AND WORLD-SOUL IN THE *TIMAEUS*

In the *Timaeus* we are promised an account that will start with the generation of the universe and end with the nature of man (27a5-6). It is true that more seems to be said about the first point, and so the cosmological aspect of the dialogue has usually -rightly- received a great deal of attention, though at the cost of some neglect of the second aspect and the interaction of the two. In the following pages I shall undertake to analyse both aspects. In this chapter I shall try to elucidate the meaning and status of god as he appears in the figure of the Demiurge, which will include taking a decision about the literal value or not of the Demiurge and of creation. After that, in the next chapter, I shall analyse which (other) entities are called "god" within the structure of reality of this dialogue and what is the relation of god to other ontological levels, particularly human reason.

The *Timaeus* presents us with a cosmogonic myth which, within a scheme of temporal succession and of passage from chaos to order, represents the universe as generated by a cause which is called, among other names, "God", the "Demiurge" or the "Creator and Father" of the Universe (28a6, c3-4, 29a3, 30a2, b8). This story is referred to by Timaeus as an *eikos logos* or an *eikos muthos* (30b7, 29d2). It is likely (*eikos*), he says, since its object, the sensible world, is a copy (*eikôn*) of intelligible realities. And, given that an account is akin to the subject-matter it explains, our discourse about the changeable universe cannot claim to have the same accuracy, stability and epistemic force that discourses

concerning the Ideas have (cf. 29b-c). On the other hand, being a *muthos*, this story follows a narrative order and resorts to many poetic or literary devices that need to be interpreted.[1] Given these features, the cosmogonic account has given rise to many different interpretations from antiquity to the present day particularly as regards two main questions:

(I) Did Plato believe -or are we expected by Plato to believe- in a temporal beginning of the cosmos? Some readers have been inclined to take the story literally, giving therefore a positive answer to the question, whereas others have denied it by following a "metaphorical" or "non-literal" reading, according to which they try to seek a deeper meaning underlying the creation story.[2]

(II) How are we going to interpret the mysterious figure of the Demiurge? Here again there are several possible answers:

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[1] However, as we noted in the Introduction (section 5) the *Timaeus* is a very special kind of myth, since, in addition to containing features that are recurrently characteristic of Platonic myths, it also introduces passages which look rather more like *logoi* in the strict sense, by appealing to statements which for Plato are verifiable at present or liable to be demonstrated. Given this complexity of the account of the *Timaeus*, I think we must take this myth seriously and not as a mere fancy, and interpret it according to the criteria proposed in the Introduction, thus making a priority of the passages which look more like *logos*, particularly if they seem to contradict more mythical passages.

[2] For a literal interpretation cf. Vlastos (1939: 379 ff.), (1964: 401 ff.); Hackforth (1959: 17 ff.); T.M. Robinson (1970: 64-5), (1979: 105 ff.), (1993: 99 ff.); Guthrie (1978: 302-5); Mohr (1989: 293 ff.). Against, cf. Taylor (1928: 66-9, 79-80); Mondolfo (1934: 70 ff.); Cornford (1937: 37 ff., 176, 203 ff.); Cherniss (1944: 421-31); Tarán (1971: 372 ff.); Brisson (1974: 104-5), (1991: 38, 49 n. 21), (1992a: 36-7); Grube (1980: 162-3); Ostenfeld (1982: 240-2). In antiquity we can count Aristotle (*De Caelo* I 10, 280a 28 ff.; *Metaph.* XII 6, 1071b37-1072a2), Plutarch (*De an. proc.* 1014a-b) and Atticus (*apud* Proclus *In Tim.* I 283, 27 ff. Diehl) in the first line, and Xenocrates (fr. 54 Heinze), Crantor (*apud* Plutarch *De an. proc.* 1012f-1013b) and Proclus (*In Tim.* I 285, 26-28; I 287, 28-288, 1 Diehl) in the second.

a) *just* as a literary device, lacking any serious philosophical meaning at all;[3]
or as having some serious philosophical importance, though here in turn the Demiurge could be taken
b) as a distinct entity in Plato's structure of reality, which deserves the independent status it is literally given in the myth,[4] or
c) as having no independent literal status but being still the symbol of some other entity, function or concept in the *Timaeus*' cosmology.[5]

In the light of these questions, the purpose of this chapter is:
(I) to examine the philosophical meaning of the creation myth and of the Demiurge;
(II) to decide which is, if any, the ontological status of the Demiurge.

I shall be arguing that we can make more sense of the text of the *Timaeus* if we take the Demiurge to be neither a creator of the world in the past nor a separate entity in the *Timaeus*' structure of reality. Conversely, I shall try to show that the Demiurge is a symbol of two related things:
(I) the concept of teleological ordering, or, in Platonic terms, a function of *primary causation* that is in turn fulfilled mainly by
(II) the World-Soul in Plato's cosmology.

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[3] This seems to be the interpretation adopted by Aristotle when, in a context in which he criticizes Plato for the use of metaphors which he calls mere "empty words" (*kenologein*), he asks "what is it that works looking to the Ideas?" (*ti gar esti to ergazomenon pros tas ideas apoblepon*) (*Metaph.* I 9, 991a19-23). This vocabulary is quite similar to that in the *Timaeus* (cf. *apergazesthai* and *blepein* of the Demiurge at 28a and 28c-29a), so that Aristotle's reference must be to the Demiurge. Cf. Guthrie (1978: 255-6, n. 3).
[4] For supporters of this view see notes 68 and 69 below.
[5] In this line cf. those mentioned in notes 54, 55 and 67 below.

I. THE PHILOSOPHICAL MEANING OF CREATION AND OF THE DEMIURGE

1. First approach to the philosophical meaning of the Demiurge

As anticipated above, the figure of the Demiurge appears in the myth as the *cause* of the sensible universe. Timaeus asserts that "whatever becomes/is generated" (*gignomenon*) does so necessarily by virtue of a cause (28a4-5, c2-3) and argues that the universe has come into being (*gegone*, 28b7), since it is a sensible thing, and all sensible things become and are generated (*gignomena kai gennêta*, c1-2). From this, it seems to follow, the sensible universe has a cause, and so the Demiurge is introduced as the *aition* (29a6) that accounts for the generation of the universe as a beautifully arranged cosmos (cf. 28b-29a), which creates it not *ex nihilo* but from a preexisting state of disorder, trying to make it resemble the eternal model of the Ideas (29a, 30a). Thus, there is a finality or purpose that this god tries to fulfil in his demiurgic action, as we find, for example, in *Tim.* 30a2-6: "Desiring (*boulêtheis*), then, that everything should be good and nothing bad as far as possible, god took over whatever was visible but was not at rest but moving with disharmony and disorder, and brought it from disorder into order, judging that the latter is in every respect better than the former."

We can then distinguish several stages of his activity as a Craftsman: He looks to the Ideas (29a, 39e); he wishes that everything should be good, or as similar to the eternal model as possible (30a, b, 30d, 31a8-b1) -and this is the purpose or design that guides his work-; and he acts accordingly, after reflecting upon the most

suitable means to attain his end (cf. e.g. 30b, 32c-33b).[6] In other words, the Demiurge has not only a *theoretical* function, by which he apprehends the intelligible order of the Ideas, but also a *practical* one, by which he tries to impose this order upon the sensible realm thus creating a true *kosmos*, according to an *intelligent purpose* or *design* which is recurrently emphasized throughout the myth (cf. *technê*, 33d1; *pronoia*, 30c1; *dianoia*, 38c3; *epinoia* 37c8, etc.). This Demiurge, however, does not just limit himself to producing the world as an orderly whole, but also legislates (41e-42d), governs (48a2) and commands (41b-d).[7]

In this way, the Demiurge seems to be a mediator between the immutable Ideas (which are paradigms or goals which guide his purposive activity) and our sensible and changing world, by trying, in a productive manner, to frame the latter in resemblance to the former. In other words, he seems to be the efficient cause, or principle of becoming and order (cf. *geneseôs kai kosmou...archê*, 29e4),[8] that makes the fulfilment of teleology possible, by contemplating the order of the Ideal realm and imposing it upon the sensible world. This is how the Demiurge can give the universe a teleological orientation, thus enabling the Ideas to have an actual influence on or connection with the visible domain. The goal pursued by the Demiurge is the good (*to eu*, 68e5; *to ariston*, 46c8, 68e1-2) of the universe, which he tries to frame (*tektainomenos*, 68e5) or fulfil (*apotelôn*, 46d1). This goodness of the cosmos, in turn, is recurrently

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[6] Cf., more precisely, for this reflection upon the best way to achieve the end that guides the demiurgic task, *logisamenos* 30b1; *logismos theou* 34a8; *logou kai dianoias theou* 38c3-4; *dianoêtheis* 32c8; *logismon* 33a6; *nomisas* 33b7; *hêgêsato* 33d1, etc.

[7] Note that *'dêmiourgos'* can also have the meaning of "magistrate", as pointed out by Brisson (1974: 50, 86-8) -cf. LSJ *ad loc.*-; see also López (1963: 76-84), and *Laws* X 902d-e as an example where *dêmiourgos* seems to have the meaning of "governor" as well as that of "craftsman".

[8] This kind of efficient or "creative" causality is also suggested by the use of terms like *poiêtês* (28c3), *gennêsas* (41a5), *sunistas* (30b5, 32c7), *apergazesthai* (30b6), *diakosmein* (69c1), etc.

understood in the *Timaeus* in terms of order or mathematical proportion, which brings about unity in its constituents.[9]

And this is, in my view, the most salient feature of the demiurgic action in general. In this respect, we must notice that the myth makes the Demiurge -as *dêmiourgos patêr*, cf. 41a7- responsible for the creation of the *immortal* aspects of the universe (such as its body and soul, time, the heavenly bodies and human reason), whereas he delegates to the lesser gods created by him (*hoi neoi theoi* 42d6, *hoi dêmiourgoi*, 75b7-8) the task of framing the mortal parts of the world (cf. 41b ff.) -such as the human body and its parts, the lower parts of human soul, plants, etc.- as well as of governing (*diakubernan*) mortal living beings, 42e. In any case, it is noteworthy that whatever demiurgic function is accomplished aims at the end that the world should be good or as similar to the Ideal model as possible (30a, b, 31a8-b1, 38b-c, 39d-e, 41b-c).

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[9] Cf. Lennox (1985: 214, 216); Brisson (1991: 33 ff.). For the connection between goodness and order see 29e-30a, where god, wanting all things to be good, makes them pass from disorder to order; 46e, where good and fair effects are contrasted with disorderly ones; 87c: *pan to agathon kalon, to de kalon ouk ametron* (a principle which is applied here on a microcosmic scale to any *zôion*, which needs *summetria* between its body and soul in order to be healthy, cf. 87c-d). For this order understood in terms of mathematical proportion causing unity cf. 31b-c: A fair combination of the four bodies in the universe is achieved by proportion (*analogia*) which produces unity most perfectly in the things it binds; at 41b1 *to echon eu* is connected with *to kalôs harmosthen*; at 53b to shape (*diaschêmatizein*) the precosmic traces *eidesi te kai arithmois* is to constitute them in the best and fairest way (from things which did not have that character); at 68e the Demiurge is said to have constructed the good (*to eu*) in all the things generated, and this is in turn, at 69b, rendered as introducing *summetriai* in each thing, both with respect to itself and to the others (note that in this case the "Demiurge" must be taken collectively -cf. *infra*, next paragraph- rather than personally, since he brings the good *en pasin tois gignomenois*, 68e5 and not just in the part that is his responsibility). Finally, at 92c, the beauty and excellence of the universe (cf. *aristos, kallistos*) is connected with the fact that it is one (*heis, monogenês*). For an analysis of the good in terms of unity also in the *Republic* cf. Burnyeat (1987: 238-40); Hitchcock (1985: 73-90).

Thus, e.g., god introduces order into disorder willing that everything should be good *kata dunamin* (30a); for the same purpose, he creates intellect and soul in the world (30b); he makes the universe one so that (*hina*) it could be similar to the Ideal Model, the *panteles zôion,* which is one (31a-b) -something to which proportion between the world's elements contributes, 31c-, and for that reason also he endows it with a complete and self-sufficient body (33a-d). God also creates time, which goes according to number, so that the universe could resemble the eternity of the model which remains in unity (37c-d, 38b-c), and, so that time could be generated, he in turn creates the planets for the delimiting and preserving of the numbers of time (38c).[10]

Now, it would seem more difficult to understand why the Demiurge should also will, within a teleological plan, the creation of the mortal parts of the universe. This can perhaps be understood by an appeal to what Lovejoy[11] has called the "principle of plenitude", namely the notion that a universe in which all the potentialities of being are realized and which contains as many different kinds of being as possible is a *better* universe than one which contains only the highest type of created beings. This principle can be seen to derive from *Tim.* 41b-c, where the Demiurge, after having fashioned the beauties of the immortal heaven, realizes that there are still three mortal kinds (*thnêta genê tria*) -*i.e.* the winged, the aquatic kind and that which moves on dry land, cf. 39e-40a- that haven't been generated: despite their mortality, they must be generated so that the universe may be complete (*teleos*), containing *all* the kinds of living beings (41b7-c2). This is imperative if

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[10] Once more we can see here the relation between goodness, order and unity as the goal pursued by *nous* as the agent of teleology that we pointed out in the previous note. For the relation between unity and completeness see Patterson (1981: 114 ff.).

[11] Cf. Lovejoy (1936: 50-5, esp. 52).

the universe is going to resemble the Ideal Living Being, which is *teleon* (30c-d) and thus contains as many kinds as this universe should have (39e-40a). On this principle, then, the demiurgic activity of the lesser gods proceeds (cf. e.g. 76d-e).

The emphasis on teleology recurs in the description of the creation of plants and mortal parts of the body, and now the aim can be summarized, concretely, as helping, as much as possible, the ruling of reason in the individual within the limits imposed by necessity:[12] plants were created for the aid and nutrition of the mortal body (77a) -and we know a *zôion* is not *kalon* if its soul is joined to a body which is weak (87d)-; the *thumos* was especially located between the midriff and neck so that (*hina*), subordinated to reason, it could restrain appetites by force (70a); the intestines were framed in spiral in order that the food should not pass through too quickly and so compel the body to need more, making the human race incontinent and thus *aphilosophon* and *amouson* (73a). Sight, as we shall see, was given so that by contemplating the movements of heaven we could stabilize our thought, something in turn indispensable for philosophy (46e-47c). So, teleology seems to be at work in these microcosmic examples in facilitating a life of reason, a life that will parallel that of the macrocosm, in which Intellect rules.[13]

This teleological function underlies the mythical figure of the Demiurge and even his manifold appearance. In this

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[12] For my treatment of necessity cf. *infra*, section 1.3 of this chapter.

[13] However, whether human reason should rule or not in the individual in actual practice, and thus cause him goods or evils, is something beyond the scope of god, who is *anaitios* of any *kakia* in the individuals (42d, e, cf. *Rep.* X 617e4-5). It is then the task and responsibility *of human beings* to live in a teleological way by making reason prevail in their lives (cf. *Tim.* 42b-c, 68e-69a, 87b, 90b-d and *infra*, ch. 3, section 2); if they do so, there will be order and unity in their souls and they will produce good effects. For how human souls can contribute to cosmic teleology cf. chapter 7 on *Laws*.

respect, if we follow the details of the narration, we shall notice that, once the lesser gods have been created and as the mythical account proceeds, the initial -theatrical- distinction between a -singular- major God creator of the immortal, and -several- lesser gods concerned with the mortal parts of the world is increasingly blurred, so that '*theos*', '*theoi*' and '*to theion*' start to be used interchangeably.[14] [15]

This would suggest that the Demiurge doesn't after all seem to have such a distinct personality, and perhaps we should focus not so much on his anthropomorphical appearance but on the -abstract and more impersonal- "demiurgic function" that he seems to represent in the universe, namely that of intelligent causation aiming at an end. This teleological function of intelligent

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[14] Cf. Cornford (1937: 280); Cherniss (1944: 608); Tarán (1971: 381); Grube (1980: 169). Thus, e.g., *theoi* are said to be responsible for the donation of philosophy, which has to do with the *immortal* part of the soul (47b2, 90d6). In addition, in several places we find the singular and the plural used indifferently in the same passage to describe the divine activity, such as in *Tim.* 44e-45a, 46e8-47c5, 75b-d, 71a and 80e1 compared with 77a3. In other passages as well we find *theos* instead of *theoi* in the creation of mortal parts of the universe (cf. 71a7, 71e3, 74d6, 78b2, 92a3). And though it can certainly be argued that here *theos* can have a more *collective* and indeterminate meaning as alluding to "the deity" in general rather than to a specific god -thus becoming closer to some uses of '*to theion*' in similar cases, cf. *Tim.* 76b2, 90a8-, this would be another indication that, with regard to the figure of the Demiurge, Plato is no longer concerned with the dramatic initial anthropomorphic distinction between a singular god on the one hand and several lesser gods on the other.

[15] The fact that we find allusions to god both in the singular and in the plural would go against sheer "monotheistic" interpretations of the *Timaeus*, such as that of Ritter (1933: 380); Hackforth (1936: 443). Cf. also the criticism of Taylor (1928: *ad* 29d7-30c1 and 69c3) by Cornford (1937: xi) and the response by Taylor (1938: 182-4), with a further reply by Cornford (1938: 324) in which he basically comes to an agreement with Taylor that Plato's monotheism does not exclude polytheism but subordinates it in that he has a leading god that rules lesser gods. It is significant that not only in the *Timaeus*, but also in other dialogues, when a principal god is mentioned, we also find the allusion to other several gods (cf. *Phil.* 30d, *Pol.* 271d, 272e, *Laws* VII 821a-b). In the *Timaeus*' cosmological structure this one-many character of god will in the end be reflected in the relation between the universe as one god and the several heavenly bodies as gods. Cf. *infra*, ch. 3, section 1.

causation may therefore be taken as a first hint of the philosophical meaning of the image of the Demiurge.

Now, in order to investigate this subject more thoroughly we first have to take a decision about the philosophical meaning of temporal creation in the *Timaeus*. For we have to decide whether the Demiurge is or is not a creator of the world in the past, as the myth seems to describe him (cf. *poiêtês*, 28c3, *epoiêse* 31b2). And this question implies another one:
Does it make sense, if one wishes to maximize the coherence of the text, to believe that the universe had a beginning in time in the *Timaeus*, even in spite of the creationist style of the myth? Let us proceed to analyse this question.

2. The problem of the temporal beginning of the world and the meaning of creation

We must beware that when dealing with this topic we are faced with a difficult philosophical question. Kant[16] suggested that the problem about the beginning or non-beginning of the world is antinomical, since arguments could be given both in favour of the thesis and the antithesis, leaving the question unresolved for theoretical reason. This kind of suggestion could be applied to the history of the interpretation of the *Timaeus*,[17] which has divided its readers into two main lines, either literalist or non-literalist as far as the temporal creation of the universe is concerned.[18] On the one hand, we have the textual assertion that the universe *gegonen, ap' archês tinos arxamenos*, since the universe is a sensible thing, and all sensible things are

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16 Cf. *Critique of Pure Reason*, A 426= B 454; A 427=B 455.
17 Even more generally, on arguments in antiquity for and against a beginning see Sorabji (1983: 193-282).
18 cf. note 2 above.

generated (*Tim.* 28b-c).[19] On the other hand, one could express qualms about taking this assertion literally or as expressing creation as a single event in the past, so that the *genesis* of the world could have a different meaning. And, as I shall argue, other passages from the same dialogue could serve to qualify the *gegone* of 28b7 or even go against its temporal interpretation as punctual generation in the past.[20]

Given the difficult character of the question and the ambiguities of the text, it would perhaps be beyond the scope of the interpreter to try to set out rigidly *what Plato thought* on the matter. It is, certainly, impossible to be dogmatic on this point, given also that, as a myth, the *Timaeus* is a symbolic kind of discourse whose richness lies in being open to more than one reading.[21] All we can attempt to do here is to weigh different interpretations and see which, if any, entails fewest philosophical difficulties and makes the text of the *Timaeus* most philosophically cogent.

In this respect, I think that a literal interpretation of the punctual beginning of the world in the *Timaeus* creates more difficulties than it solves, so that several arguments could be given for a non-literal view. Let us examine some of them.

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[19] On whether this argument should be taken as having a force of its own and as coming before the beginning of the mythical account or not see, for a positive answer, Hackforth (1959: 17 ff.), Vlastos (1964: 402), T.M. Robinson (1979: 105 ff.) and Prior (1985: 95) in a literalist line. Against, cf. Cornford (1937: 37 ff.), Tarán (1971: 382 ff.).

[20] In addition, *Phaedrus* 245c ff. could be seen to contradict a literal reading of the creation of soul in the *Timaeus* (34b10 ff.), for in the former dialogue soul is said to be ungenerated.

[21] Nor would it be surprising if Plato had wanted to be deliberately silent about a definite answer in order to stimulate discussion amongst his students (who probably also knew the argument of *Phaedrus* 245c ff.). That silence -which then needn't be "disturbing", *pace* Dillon (1989: 72)- might be suggested by the fact that even his direct disciples -such as Aristotle and Xenocrates, cf. *supra* n. 2- were in disagreement about the matter.

(i) If we take the *Timaeus* literally and suppose that the universe, as a sensible thing, has had a beginning, we should also admit that it will undergo corruption. For Plato asserts that sensible things are "generated and corrupted" (cf. *gignomenon kai apollumenon*, 28a3). Similarly, the *Republic* had already stated that "whatever is generated undergoes corruption" (*genomenôi panti phthora estin*, VIII 546a2). However, this conclusion is contradicted by the assertion of the immortality of the world, its soul and the heavenly bodies in the *Timaeus* (cf. *agêrôn* for the world at 33a2; *apaustou biou* for the World-Soul at 36e4; *aidia* for the heavenly bodies at 40b5).[22] So if the universe is immortal, it should have no beginning.

The connection between *genesis* and perishability is restated at *Tim*. 41a7-b6, where the Demiurge says to the created gods that "whatever is bound is dissolvable" (*to dethen pan luton*), so, given that they were generated (cf. *gegenêsthe*), they are not completely *alutoi* or immortal, though they shall not be dissolved because of the will of the Demiurge which is good. One could then apply this to the world and interpret literally that the universe is in fact generated and *perishable*, though it is made immortal by god's will. However, we must notice that at *Tim*. 28a it was claimed that sensible -generated- things are *de facto* corrupted, not just -*de iure*- corruptible, as *Tim*. 41a-b suggests. So, even if we take literally the suggestion that the universe is immortal just by the will of the Demiurge, being otherwise perishable, that would still mean, according to *Tim*. 28a3 (cf. *Rep*. VIII 546a2), that it was not generated, for the claim in those passages is that everything that is generated is *destroyed*, not just *destroyable*.

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[22] The same could be said for human reason, which is called *athanaton* at 42e7, 43a4-5, 69c6, etc. though at the same time created by god (41d ff.). Cf. similar attributions of immortality to soul at *Phaedrus* 245c-246a and *Laws* XII 959b3-4, 967d6-7.

(ii) As has often been stressed,[23] the supposition of a beginning of the world in time (from a previous chaotic state) seems to be contradicted by the Platonic notion of time in the *Timaeus*. In effect, according to *Tim.* 37d5-7 (cf. 38a), time is the "image of eternity..., an image which moves by number" (*i.e.* the notion of number, and therefore that of order, is included in the very definition of "time"). In addition, it is coexistent with the *kosmos* as an ordered whole -as suggested by its coming into being "at the same time" as the universe, 38b6-, so that without order there is no time. According to this, neither creation by the Demiurge nor the precosmic chaos in the *Timaeus* can have taken place in time, not even in the second kind of time that Vlastos suggests (as irreversible temporal succession of past and future which cannot be measured)[24] since even past and future according to the text are created by the Demiurge (37e).[25] On the other hand, it is only the Ideas that exist outside of time (cf. 37c-38a, esp. 37e5-38a4), so the precosmic chaos could not have had an atemporal mode of being and therefore could not have existed at all.

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[23] Cf., among others, Cherniss (1944: 426-7 n. 361-2), Tarán (1971: 378-80), Brisson (1991: 49). Compare the argument in Proclus (*In Tim.* III 49, 20-50, 7 Diehl).

[24] Cf. Vlastos (1964: 410-1). For a "precosmic time" understood as duration cf. also Skemp (1942: 111), followed by Hackforth (1959: 22). In antiquity, Proclus reports and criticizes a theory of a "twofold time" in support of a literal view of the precosmic chaos (*In Tim.* I 286, 20 ff. Diehl).

[25] Vlastos in fact sees this textual evidence against his view, but answers only with arguments from silence, claiming that Plato at least does not deny the existence of a second kind of time, though neither is there any positive textual support for his view, as such a large claim would surely demand. These arguments are in turn based upon his claim that Plato sees past and future as *"attributes"* of time -as a rendering of *chronou gegonota eidê* at 37e4- which could therefore, as "attributes", have existed independently of cosmic time (cf. Vlastos [1964: 410-2]). But "*eidos*" cannot mean "attribute", but rather means "kind" of time. And since we are told that time was generated together with the universe, it would follow that any generated kind of time was generated together with the universe. In addition, Plato explicitly links past and future to the measurability of time when he says at 38a that they are "kinds of time...which circles by number".

(iii) If we take the *Timaeus* picture literally, it would *prima facie* seem that in the *Timaeus* god undergoes a change from not creating to creating, or from inactivity to activity, and then, again, that he stops acting when he delegates to the lesser gods the creation of the mortal parts of the universe (*Tim.* 41c-d). This anthropomorphic characterization of god seems however to conflict with god's goodness (*Tim.* 29e), if we interpret it as explicated in other dialogues both before and after the *Timaeus*, e.g. in the *Republic* (II 380d-381d),[26] where we read that, being perfect, god cannot change except for the worse, and *Laws* X (900c ff.), where it is suggested that god cannot be inactive or lazy since his concern for the world is definitory of his goodness.

Now, if there are reasons against taking creation or the beginning of the world in time literally, why did Plato choose this kind of picture? I think so much attention has been focused on creation or its denial that one tends to forget the most important purpose served by the creation myth, namely, to show that the universe is the product of intelligent design. It has been observed that cosmogonists prior to Plato often depicted the world as created by aimless forces; so Plato wants to meet them on their own ground and show, conversely, that the universe is the result of a teleological plan.[27] This is the same strategy he follows in the *Laws*, where he claims the superiority of birth of soul over body, but where no precosmic chaos is mentioned at all; rather, disorderly motion is there proved to be a hypothesis, how the world would be if it were not governed by intelligence as it is (cf. *Laws* X 898b-c).[28] One could think of the precosmic chaos in the *Timaeus* in the same way: although it could

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[26] As pointed out by Tarán (1971: 380-1).
[27] Cf. Cornford (1937: 31), with particular reference to the Atomists.
[28] Cf. *infra*, ch. 7, section 3.2.

not have existed in time, it could still have the purpose in the myth of depicting how the world would be *if* the principles posited by the materialists prevailed, *i.e.*, if god were absent from the universe and its tendency to disorder were left unchecked.[29] Rather than separate factors which rule in succession, *anankê* and *Nous* seem to be two factors which *coexist* in the cosmos as a *sustasis* of them (cf. *Tim.* 48a), but a *sustasis* in which *Nous* rules over necessity (cf. *ibidem*).

Does this mean then that it is not right to say that the world *gegone*, as the text claims at *Tim.* 28b7? I would be inclined to say that it is right, though partial: If *Nous* is always coexisting with necessity, and if god is always governing the *kosmos* and being the cause of the generation of its order, then we should take generation by an intelligent cause as a perpetual process, and say that the universe not only *gegone*, but *gignetai* and *genêsetai* unendingly.[30] This is exactly what is suggested by *Tim.* 38c1-3: "Whereas the *paradeigma* exists in all eternity, the former [=the *ouranos* at 38b6] *continuously for all time* (*dia telous ton hapanta chronon*) *has been generated* (*gegonôs*), exists (*ôn*) and will exist (*esomenos*)". In addition, there are some other passages where creation is not just depicted in the past (as we can find for example at the beginning of the myth), but also in the present, something that would support the view of creation as a perpetual process. Thus e.g. we find the use of the words *poiei* (37d6) and *mêchanatai* (37e3) -in a passage where, interestingly, Plato talks specifically about tense (37e4 ff.), so that one would expect him to be particularly careful about the tenses he is using.

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[29] In *Tim.* 53a8-b4, where it is said that the condition *alogôs kai ametrôs* belongs to things *hotan apêi tinos theos*, I take the *hotan* as conditional. Cf. LSJ *ad loc.*

[30] This was Proclus' interpretation (*In Tim.* I 282, 27-30; 288, 14-17; 290, 23-291, 1; III 51, 7-10 Diehl).

If, then, generation is a perpetual process, *gegone* at 28b6 could be taken as pointing also to the more general concept of *genesis* as process of change, as Cornford[31] has interpreted and as we could take those passages where the world itself is connected with the realm of becoming (*genesis kai to pan tode*, 29d7-e1; *genesis kai kosmos*, 29e4) and where we are told that, "as *ousia* is to *genesis*, so is *alêtheia* to *pistis*" (29c3).[32]

And it is still important that at *Tim*. 28b Plato says that the universe *gegonen ap'archês*. For this talk about "generation" is also meant to point at the dependence of the world on a higher principle, insofar as it has a

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[31] Cf. Cornford (1937: 26); also Cherniss (1944: 422), Tarán (1971: 384).

[32] As Cornford (1937: 24-6) has remarked, *genesis* or becoming can have both the meaning of "coming into existence at some time", or "being in process of change"; in the latter sense, "it is true that in such becoming something new is always appearing, something old passing away, but the process itself can be conceived as going on perpetually, without beginning or end" (25). We can, in turn, take becoming as process of change at least in the sense of constant generation (as I am arguing in the case of the universe) or constant change in some or other respect.
M. Frede (1988) has recently challenged the latter interpretation, by contending that, if there is some respect in which something is becoming, there is another one in which it isn't becoming, *i.e.* is, but objects of experience do not have any kind of being whatsoever, since this would go against "the clear and straightforward contrast between being and becoming" established by Plato at *Tim.* 27d6-28a1 (40). His argument, though, is unconvincing, since Plato immediately qualifies the contrast at 28a3-4 by saying that *to gignomenon... ontôs oudepote on* (never *really* is); something that Frede concedes on p. 39 ("Plato may be ready to admit that ordinary objects of experience... can have 'being' in an ordinary sense of the verb 'to be', but he here would be denying that they could be said to be in some philosophical sense of 'to be', whatever this may be") though then he overlooks his own provision in the process of his argument. Plato is not denying being or existence to sensible particulars, since he does indeed attribute *ousia* or *einai* to them in the *Timaeus*: specifically, he speaks of *ousia gignomenê* at 35a1-3 and *ousia skedastê* at 37a5; cf. 52d3 for attribution of *einai* to *genesis*; what they certainly don't have is real being in the sense of the stable and constantly unchanging being of the Ideas, and it is in these terms that the philosophical contrast between *genesis* and *ousia* is drawn. For further discussion on being and becoming cf. Code (1988), Bolton (1975), Nehamas (1975), Irwin (1977), Jordan (1983: 48-66), Prior (1985: 89-93); on the philosophical meaning of "being" cf. Vlastos (1965), Kahn (1981). See also *infra*, ch. 4, n. 19.

derivative existence and is not the ultimate reality.[33] This is what Brisson has called "ontological generation"[34] -as an alternative to the interpretation of *genesis* as mere generation in the past- and seems to be suggested not only by the image of creation but also by the fact that the universe is said to have no immortality in its own right but is dependent on a superior cause.

If this is so, what about the "Creator God" (*poiêtês*, 28c3)? It seems that the Demiurge should not be interpreted as a god who anthropomorphically created the world "once upon a time", but can at the very most be called "creator" insofar as he is the efficient cause which is perpetually generating and in that way keeping order in the universe. Let us recall, however, that the artisanal metaphor, suggesting a definite product and different steps of the work starting and developing in time, has proven most useful for Plato to suggest the teleological arrangement of the world, like any good product of art,[35] which is made not at random but with a definite purpose (cf. *Gorg.* 503e-504a) seeking to fulfil an end through a chain of means. It is to this teleological -and not merely mechanical- arrangement of the world that we should now turn our attention, by investigating further the philosophical meaning of the Demiurge.

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[33] Cf. also *infra*, ch. 3, section 2.1.

[34] Cf. Brisson (1974: 336-8). The same suggestion is found in Hackforth (1936: 442); Cherniss (1944: 424).

[35] It is also interesting to notice that Aristotle, while taking creation literally and thus criticizing Plato in favour of the view that the universe is eternal (*De Caelo* I 10, 279b12-280a11, 280a28 ff.), more than once, however, resorted to the artisanal metaphor -which he seemed to have criticized at *Metaph.* I 9 991a19-23, cf. *supra*, n. 3- to emphasize the teleological arrangement in the cosmos. See e.g. *GC* II 10, 336b27-32, *PA* IV 10, 687a6 ff; cf. *De Caelo* I 4, 271a33.

3. The Demiurge as a symbol of intelligent causation working in a perpetual universe

In view of what has been said, the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* seems to have not only the function of *generating* order (cf. 29e4) as a cause (*aition*, 28c2) but also, if this generation is perpetual, that of keeping the cosmos in good order. This in turn corresponds to the function of *governing* that the myth allots to him (cf. 48a2, 42e3); a governance which, despite its usual description in the past, must also be understood as present if the world is to continue being orderly, since we read that everything behaves without plan and measure (*alogôs kai ametrôs*) whenever god is absent from something (*hotan apêi tinos theos*, 53a8-b4), in a context where god must allude to the Demiurge.[36] So, if the world is good and fair (as Plato takes for granted at 29a5, 92c), *i.e.* orderly (cf. 87c4-5), it is implied that god must be present in it to sustain it, and not just "retire" from it once he has finished his work.

Now, we should notice that, in many other dialogues, these functions of ordering and governance are said to belong either to *Nous* or to god.[37] Thus we could infer that the Demiurge is or symbolizes a *nous*, which has, apart from an intellectual role of contemplating the Ideas, an active or efficient role with respect to the sensible world. This assumption is supported by some references in the *Timaeus* itself: we have, on the one hand, numerous allusions to intellectual activities of the Demiurge (cf. 39e, and also 30b1, 32c8, 33a6, 33b7, 33d1, 34a8, 38c3, etc.); on the other hand, the works of the Demiurge are called "*ta dia nou dedêmiourgêmena*"

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[36] Since it is subsequently said that [he] *dieschêmatisato* the precosmic traces with forms and numbers (b4-5).

[37] *Nous diakosmôn panta*: *Phaedo* 97c1-2; *Phil.* 28e3, *Laws* XII 967b5-6 (cf. *Crat.* 400a8-10); for god as *kosmôn* or *diakosmôn* cf. *Phaedrus* 246e4-5, *Pol.* 273d4, e3, *Laws* X 899b7-8. For *Nous* as *basileus* or *archôn* cf. *Phil.* 28c7, 30d8; for god in the same role, cf. *Pol.* 271d5, *Laws* X 903b7, 904a6, 905e2, etc.

(47e4), and the Demiurge is pictured as a *nous* that rules over necessity by persuasion (48a2). So god presents the essential feature of rationality, and -inextricably- goodness (cf. 29a, e), since his producing good effects is based on his knowledge of the Ideas.

We can then ask ourselves: How does this causation of *nous* operate upon the world? Not omnipotently, it seems, for the Demiurge is limited not only by the Ideal pattern (the "Perfect Living Being", 31b1, cf. 30c, 39e1) that guides his work but also by "necessity" (*anankê*, 47e5-48a5), also called "necessary cause" (68e-69a). This seems to be a property inherent in the materials which fill in space upon which god works,[38] and represents a potential source of disorder within the universe, so that the constant task of *nous* consists in checking, *kata dunamin*, this tendency to disorder and making it subservient to its own purposes. So we find that *anankê* is an ambiguous concept in the *Timaeus* (in the light of 46c-e, 47e-48a, 68e-69a):

(i) if or when *anankê* is undirected by *nous*, or left to itself, it becomes closely connected with chance (*tuchê*) as cause of disorder.[39] Under these circumstances, *anankê*

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[38] At 48a-b necessity or the wandering cause is connected with the nature of the -so called- four elements and the *pathê* that they possessed before the generation of the universe. This in turn would correspond with *to sômatoeides* in *Pol.* 273b4-6, which is said to be *suntrophon* to the nature of the universe (cf. *emphuton* at 269d3) and to belong to the ancient nature that prevailed before the present cosmic order. For its connection with *to apeiron* in the *Philebus* see *infra*, ch. 4, sections 5.4 and 5.5 (note also *apeiron* in *Pol.* 273d6 in connection with the *anomoiotês* inherent to the bodily).

[39] Cf. the relation between *ex anankês* and *to tuchon* corresponding to a type of cause at *Tim.* 46e; *tuchê ex anankês* at *Laws* X 889c1-2 also in a causal context. (Cf. Cornford [1937: 165 ff.]; Guthrie [1978: 273].) In this latter case, chance as a cause (cf. 888e) is contrasted with *technê, nous, theos* and *psuchê* as akin concepts, in the debate Plato holds with his materialistic opponents as to the primary principle of everything (889c, 892b-c). We find a similar opposition in the *Sophist* (265c, e), where chance seems now to be put in terms of an "*aitia automatê*" and without purpose (*aneu dianoias*) in contrast with a divine *poiêtikê technê* or a demiurgic cause

(cf. 46e2) corresponds to those "causes which, if/when deprived of intelligence, always produce random and disorderly effects" *([aitiai] hosai monôtheisai phronêseôs to tuchon atakton hekastote exergazontai,* 46e5-6). In this respect *anankê* is a "wandering cause" (*planômenê aitia,* 48a, cf. its relation with *anankê* in the same passage, and particularly *di'anankês* at 47e4-5), and is responsible for the -disorderly- motion that is depicted to have taken place in the precosmos (cf. 48a-b, where the wandering cause is said to "produce motion by nature", 48a7, and the further reference to the properties of the bodily before the generation of the cosmos, 48b3-5).

(ii) Under the guidance (or "persuasion" -to put it mythically) of *Nous*, *anankê* becomes an orderly mechanism of bodily causes and effects that serves or cooperates as a means for the good purposes of *nous* (cf. 46c7-e2, 47e5-48a5, 68e1-69a5). In this respect *anankê* becomes a "co-cause" (*sunaition,* 46c7, cf. its connection with *ex anankês* at 46e1-2) or "subservient cause" (*aitia hupêretousa* -cf. *ex anankês*- at 68e) for the latter, something necessary in the sense of the means without which an end cannot be fulfilled.[40] However Plato

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operating with *logos* and *epistêmê* (cf. *supra,* Introd., section 2); and in the *Philebus* (28d), where the force of the irrational and random and mere chance (*tên tou alogou kai eikêi dunamin kai to hopêi etuchen*) competes with *phronêsis* or *nous* for the governance of the universe. (Cf. also the opposition of causes in *Tim.* 46e which we shall analyse below.)

[40] Cf. Cornford (1937: 174); Moreau (1939: 39 ff), and its connection with the concept of "hypothetical necessity" in Aristotle, *Metaph.* V 5 (cf. also the connection between *anankaiai aitiai* and *aneu toutôn* at *Tim.* 69a). At *Pol.* 281d-e Plato distinguishes two kinds of *technai, sunaition* and *aitia* and describes the former as providing the instruments without which (*hôn mê paragenomenôn*) the demiurgic *technê* cannot do its work. Cf. also the distinction, already in *Phaedo* 99b3-4, between *to aition tôi onti* and *ekeino aneu hou to aition ouk an pot'eiê aition,* though here Plato refuses to call the latter causes in any sense and their importance is downgraded, by contrast with his attempt in the *Timaeus* to give detailed mechanical descriptions; cf. Easterling (1967: 34-5), Guthrie (1978: 273). (For a teleological reading of *aitia* in the final myth of the *Phaedo* cf. Sedley [1991: 370-2].)

carefully stresses that necessary or secondary causes should be sought for the sake of primary (46d8) or "divine" causes (68e7-69a5) towards the fulfilment of the good (cf. *to ariston* 46c8 and *to eu* 68e5).[41]

We can see that, in this description, both necessary and primary causes appear to be thought of as efficient, insofar as both of them *produce* certain effects (cf. *apergazomena* at 46d3, *exergazontai* at 46e6 and *kinountôn* at 46e2 predicated of necessary causes, and *dêmiourgoi* of primary causes at 46e4). In the second case, that kind of efficient cause has also a teleological constituent;[42] in the first, it may or may not have it according to its subordination or not to primary causes, since it is by itself blind to any goal. Both necessary and primary causes seem to be necessary conditions for the fulfilment of teleology, and one could wonder what it is that makes the former "primary". It doesn't seem satisfactory to adopt Fine's criterion of "saliency" that she uses as regards the *Phaedo* to mark off the cause from its necessary material conditions,[43] since the question might then arise what is it that makes it salient, by what criterion do we call it salient. It seems rather that primacy lies in *initiating* a causal chain, a primacy that is given in addition an axiological import by being purposively oriented towards a positive goal.[44]

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[41] This "good" does not need to be the Idea in the transcendent way Ideas are described in the *Timaeus*, but can just be a character immanent to the world which the Demiurge tries to "complete" or "fulfil" (*apotelôn*, 46d1). The main Idea that Plato mentions as guiding the Demiurge's activity is that of *ho esti zôion* (39e8), which is already *teleon* (cf. 30d2, 39e1) and whose completeness he tries to imitate in the world he produces. The use of the word *idea* at 46c8 can thus be associated with an immanent -and not transcendent- character of goodness, in the same way as in *Tim.* 28a6-8 *ho dêmiourgos* is said to "realize" (cf. *apergazêtai*) the form (*idea*) of something by looking at a paradigm, something that unequivocally suggests that *idea* does not have to be applied to the transcendent Idea. *Pace* T.M. Robinson (1993: 104-5).

[42] To adopt terminology of Fine's (1987: 93).

[43] Cf. Fine (1987: 91).

[44] This is suggested by *Tim.* 46c7-e6, firstly, by Plato's complaint against those who mistake *sunaitia* with real *aitia* that those things do not have in themselves *logos* or *nous* (d4), and, secondly, in his

Now, even if we interpret that *Nous* is always in control of the universe, we could still wonder whether necessity as described above in (i) -*i.e.* left to itself as a cause of disorder- is just an abstraction or has a real presence within the ordered cosmos under the rule of *Nous*.[45] Evidence from the text inclines us towards the latter possibility. For Plato repeatedly uses restrictive expressions when alluding to the operation of Intelligence upon necessity. So, for example, we are told at 48a that *Nous* rules over *anankê* "by persuading her to lead towards the best the majority [*ta pleista*, and not *ta panta*] of things that take place";[46] at 46c7-d1 god makes use of co-causes "when fulfilling, so far as possible (*kata to dunaton*) the form of the best". These qualifications would suggest that there is always a

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characterization of secondary causes as those which are moved by other things (e1), implying that primary causes are not moved by other things. The latter point, and the association of primary causes with soul at d6, would lead us to postulate the theory of soul as self-mover and principle of motion -expounded in *Phaedrus* 245c ff. and *Laws* X 896a-b- as present also in the *Timaeus*. I shall argue below that it is in fact soul -and particularly the World-Soul at the macrocosmic level- that should in fact be taken as principle of motion in the *Timaeus*.

[45] That the triumph of *Nous* over *anankê* is complete was the thesis put forward by Taylor (1928: 293 *ad* 46e5-6), and afterwards criticized by Cornford (1937: 209), who was in turn followed, among others, by Cherniss and Ross (cf. note 47 below); though recently Lennox (1985: 209-12) has returned to the old position.

[46] It is striking that Lennox (1985: 210), when arguing for the opposite view that there is no residue of recalcitrant necessity left in a world demiurgically framed, quotes precisely this passage, which would rather count as counterevidence for his view. In addition, Lennox supposes that there is no compromise in the *Timaeus* between the Demiurge and his materials, though this view seems challenged by *Tim.* 75a-c, where the deity has to choose between two properties which would be best together but which cannot be combined: it is inborn in the bones' necessary nature (cf. *ex anankês... phusis*, 75a7-b1) that they cannot have a great deal of flesh and sharp perception at the same time; if they could, our head would be surrounded with flesh and we would live longer and more healthily; but, as things are, the gods have to reflect on the alternatives (cf. *analogizomenoi poteron* b8) and choose (*haireteon* c3) a better race with shorter life, *i.e.* having a head with sharp perception and intelligence but much weaker. This does clearly suggest a compromise, since we are told that the head would have had both characteristics "*if these had admitted to coexist*" (75b4).

random residue of necessity left in the cosmos upon which *Nous* could not settle with absolute control,[47] so that the "instrument" could ocassionally become an "obstacle". This however does not prevent Plato from saying that the world is "the most beautiful of things generated" (29a5).[48]

What has been said can thus serve to illustrate the relation between *Nous* and *anankê*, or teleology and mechanism in the *Timaeus* cosmology. *Anankê*, or secondary causes, are also described as those *aitiai* which "occur by other things being moved and in turn moving other things by necessity" (46e1-2); this is referred to bodies (46d7) and corresponds to what we could call a mechanical series. However, as we have seen, this mechanism does not seem to become truly orderly except by the intervention of *nous*, which for the most part deprives those bodily traces of their tendency to disorder (cf. 47e ff,, 53a-b, 69b-c). And so the workings of god correspond to those

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[47] Cf. Cornford (1937: 209); Cherniss (1944: 421-2, 444); Ross (1951: 128). That residue of *anankê* would be particularly present not so much in heaven, where *nous* seems to prevail to such an extent that the heavenly bodies are called gods, but in the earthly and mortal domain. We read already in the *Theaetetus* (176a5-8) that it is necessary that "evils wander about the mortal nature and this realm", not among the gods. And it is precisely as regards our mortal domain that the *Timaeus* myth gives the specific examples of the resistance that *anankê* opposes to *Nous*. We can see this in certain properties of the materials on which the deity works, which are not so docile for his purposes, such as the hard constitution of the bones, which presents the advantage of serving for the protection of the brain and marrow, but has the concomitant disadvantage of making the bones brittle (cf. *Tim.* 73b-74b); or in the fact that the deity has to compromise in the construction of the human head, abundance of flesh not being compatible with acute perception (cf. 75a7-b1 referred to in note above). Cf. Cornford (1937: 175-6); also Festugière (1949: 111-3) on the random motions of the infant at 43a-b as manifesting *anankê* without the rule of *nous*. Note that the universe is described as a mixture arising from the combination of *anankê* and *nous* (*memeigmenê...ex anankês te kai nou sustaseôs*, 47e5-48a2), a description that would go against the view that the distinction between necessary and primary causes concerns merely our explanation and understanding of the world and is "not an account of distinct aspects of the world's make-up", as contended by Lennox (1985: 212).

[48] These random effects could still be explained within a theory of soul as principle of all motion, as has been attempted by Cherniss (1944: 444-5) and Brisson (1974: 503-4); cf. *infra*, ch. 7, section 5.

primary or divine causes which "by using *nous*, are artisans of fair and good effects" (46e4), *i.e.* orderly effects, since *pan to agathon kalon, to de kalon ouk ametron,* 87c4-5. But, at the same time, the teleological action of *Nous* leans on this mechanical succession as a means without which the former could not be fulfilled. So we can see how teleology subordinates mechanism but at the same time relies on it for its achievement. Thus the relation between the two is not one of exclusion but of complementarity.[49]

We could in general terms attempt to illuminate such a relation between teleology and mechanism in the following way on the basis of the model of human craftsmanship: (i) conceiving the end (say, in this case, achieving the best possible similarity between the world and its model), which goes from the notion of the end to be realized (ii) back to the conditions which serve as its means; (iii) fulfilment of the end through the realization of its means, which is effected in a direction opposite to (ii).[50] Through (i) and (ii) we can see how teleology is prior to (and in that sense subordinates) mechanism; through (iii), how the former leans on the latter for its actual fulfilment.

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[49] In this regard, the *Timaeus*' attitude towards its "materialistic" predecessors would be one not of exclusion but of subordination within its own teleological outlook. For Plato's debt to Presocratic accounts in the *Timaeus*, such as those of Empedocles and the Atomists, and his in turn original contribution to the mechanical description of phenomena, cf. Lloyd (1968: 84-90).

[50] Cf. Moreau (1939: 39 ff.); and a similar picture of the relation between teleology and mechanism in Hartmann (1932: 274-7). It would be in stage (iii) that we have the effective causal chain directed towards its goal, and since what triggers it is the intending of the goal by the agent, we can see how this description of teleology avoids the problem of "reverse causation" (from the future goal to the events triggered by it) that has in modern literature been identified as one of the main charges or difficulties that teleological accounts have to address when no intentional agent is posited (cf. e.g. Nissen [1986: 129-32], L. Wright [1976: 7-11]).

In this way, the same phenomenon such as vision can admit of both a mechanical and a teleological explanation: at *Tim.* 45b-d its mechanism is explained in terms of the theory of "collision" between fires, though this mechanical order is introduced by the gods (45b4-6) and has no other purpose or greater function (*ergon*, 46e8) than to enable human beings to contemplate the undisturbed motions in heaven so as to correct the wandering motions of human intellect (47b-c) and, by learning number, acquire philosophical wisdom (47a4-b2).

Now, in the light of what has been said, we find that the relation between *nous* and *anankê* is, according to the causal scheme of *Tim.* 46c-e and 68e-69a, identical with that between primary or divine causes and secondary or necessary causes. In fact, we have seen above that *anankê* corresponds to necessary causes, and we can equally expect that *nous* correspond to the primary or divine kind of causation. This is precisely what seems to be suggested by Plato's definition of primary causes, since these are said to belong to an "intelligent nature" (*emphrôn phusis*) at 46d8[51] and called *hosai meta nou kalôn kai agathôn dêmiourgoi* at 46e4. There are two key words here: *nous* and *dêmiourgoi*, which strongly suggest that, at a more abstract or conceptual level, *the Demiurge is a symbol of this function of primary efficient causation*, which is responsible for the fulfilment of teleology in the universe.[52]

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[51] This would rule out that the primary causes could correspond to the Ideas (see *infra,* section 2.1). In addition, *phusis* is in its true sense said to correspond to soul, in connection with intellect and *technê*, at *Laws* X 892b-c. Cf. *infra,* ch. 7 section 1.

[52] In this definition of primary cause we can note again two essential features of god: his rationality and therefore his goodness, which is known by its effects: the order in the cosmos, which is recurrently due, as we have seen, to a *Nous diakosmôn.* For these features of rationality and goodness as characterizing god in general cf. for god's goodness, *Tim.* 29e1-2, 30a6-7, 42e2-4, *Rep.* II 379a7 ff., *Phaedrus* 247a7, *Theaet.* 176a5-c1, *Laws* X 899b5-7, 900d2, 901e ff; for god's rationality, *Tim.* 51e5-6, *Symp.* 204a1-2, *Phaedrus* 247c-d, *Theaet.* 176b1-3, *Laws* X 900d5-7, 902e8.

This hypothesis is in turn supported by the fact that, in the two passages dealing with the distinction between primary and secondary causes, it is at first god or the Demiurge who is introduced as "taking over" (*parelambanen*, 68e3) or "making use of" (*chrêtai*, 46c8) necessary causes as "co-causes" towards the fulfilment of the the good (46c8-d1, 68e5-6), and immediately afterwards the text passes on to speak of primary or divine causes as opposed to the necessary or secondary ones (46d1-e6, 68e6-69a5). We can see here how, even though these passages start with a mythological allusion to the Demiurge, his functions are subsequently put, in a more abstract way, in terms of primary causation, something that would again confirm that the former is a symbol of the latter. On the other hand, that the Demiurge corresponds to these divine or "primary causes"[53] is supported by the very beginning of the myth, where he is called "the best of causes" (29a5-6).

So, in the light of all this, we can conclude that the Demiurge is the mythical counterpart of the notion of intelligent primary causes, which are defined precisely as *dêmiourgoi* of good effects,[54] and which guarantee the fulfilment of teleology in the universe by subordinating and at the same time depending on mechanism. And this is, in my view, the deepest philosophical meaning underlying the figure of the Demiurge.

II. THE ONTOLOGICAL STATUS OF THE DEMIURGE

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[53] As we can see from the plural, it is the demiurgic intelligent action in general (both that of the Demiurge Father and of the lesser gods, including the heavenly bodies) that corresponds to this kind of causation.

[54] The idea that the Demiurge symbolizes the primary causes at 46e4 is briefly suggested by Cherniss (1944: 607), (1950: 207), (1954: 25); cf. Tarán (1971: 381) after Cherniss.

So far we have seen that the Demiurge is a symbol of a kind of -efficient- causation. However, we still have to decide *which entity* or *entities* embody that abstract concept of causation within the Platonic structure of reality. In other words, we have to investigate the ontological status of the Demiurge. We have seen that the Demiurge is or performs the functions of a *nous*. But what kind of *nous* is it? Does the Demiurge represent a separate *nous* in the *Timaeus* ontology (distinct from the Ideas, the World-Soul, etc.), which deserves the independent status it is given in the myth? Or is it rather the mythical double of some other entity which would fulfil his causal function, such as the Ideas or the World-Soul, even though they appear as different from the Demiurge in the story? I shall try to argue, within the second line, that it is the World-Soul that fulfils the causal function performed by the Demiurge. For that purpose I shall start by ruling out the other possibilities.

1. Can the Demiurge be a symbol of the Ideas?

If the Demiurge is a *nous* the answer should be no, despite the fact that several scholars have been tempted to take him in this way.[55] That Ideas and *nous* are different entities seems constantly presupposed in the *Timaeus* as a distinction between the object and the faculty which knows it (27d5-28a4, 37a-c, 52a1-4). On the other hand, the dependence of *nous* on the Ideas is clear at 37b-c, where *nous* is described as arising in soul when the latter is in contact with the Ideas (cf. also *Rep.* VI 508d). Ideas are the objects of intelligence which exist independently (cf. *auto eph' heautou,* 51b8, *auta kath' hauta,* 51c1; cf. 51d4-5),[56] whereas, conversely,

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[55] For the Demiurge as a symbol of the Ideas and/or the Good cf. Mugnier (1930: 131 ff.); Robin (1938: 180); Moreau (1939: 35-6, 43-5); Verdenius, (1954: 248); Hampton (1990: 90, 116 n. 66); and, with slight variations, Diès (1927: 550-1, 553-5).

[56] Remember also *Parm.* 132b-c against the suggestion that the Ideas could be thoughts in the soul (cf. Burnyeat [1982: 20-2]), a passage

intelligence as such depends on the existence of its object. Ideas are said to be intelligible (*noêta*, cf. e.g. 30c7, 48e6, 51c5; *nooumena* 51d5) rather than intelligent. In addition, Ideas are essentially immutable (*akinêtôs*, *Tim.* 38a3, cf. 52a1-3), whereas *nous* is said to be in motion (*Tim.* 34a).[57] This motion, we could add, gives the demiurgic intellect an efficient power of actual influence on the sensible and moving world which Ideas, in their immutability, lack, limiting themselves to being goals or paradigms (29a-c, 39e7, 48e5). We must recall, in this respect, that the feature of efficient cause or *archê kinêseôs* which Aristotle rightly did not find in Plato's Ideas (cf. *Metaph.* I 9, 991a11 ff., 991b3-5), is in Plato's dialogues generally fulfilled not by the latter[58] but by soul (explicitly called *archê kinêseôs* in *Phaedrus* 245c9 and *aitia kinêseôs* in *Laws* X 896b1, cf. *archê kinêseôs* at 895b3), or specifically by *nous* (in its role of *diakosmein* and *poiein*),[59] as happens at a cosmic level with the *nous* of the Demiurge, who is called -as we have seen- the principle of becoming and order (*archê...geneseôs kai kosmou*, 29e4). And it is because of this efficient and mediating power that the Demiurgic *nous* can connect the heterogeneous realms of Ideas and sensibles, the ontological gap between which seems particularly emphasized in the *Timaeus*.[60]

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that would additionally challenge any view of Ideas as concepts in God's mind (*pace* Ashbaugh [1988: 60]).

[57] Likewise, when in several passages of the *Timaeus* we read that the world has been made in the image of the "perfect" or "intelligible living being" (cf. *zôion* 30c, *to panteles zôion* 31b1, *noeton zôion* 39e1, etc.) we should interpret that Plato is not so much alluding to the Ideas as living (*pace* de Vogel [1970: 229]) as to the Idea of Living Being. Cf. Cornford (1937: 40-1); Cherniss (1944: 576-7); Brisson (1974: 81-2); Patterson (1981: 112).

[58] The passage at *Tim.* 50c7-d4, where the Receptacle is compared to a mother, the sensible world to a son and Ideas to a father -something that looks striking given that the Demiurge was called a father at 28c3-, seems rather to be settling the latter comparison in terms of the resemblance between the product and its original, with which, again, Plato would be stressing the character of the Ideas as paradigms rather than efficient causes. (Cf. Brisson [1974: 129].)

[59] Cf. e.g. *Phil.* 26e-27b, 28e, 30c5-7.

[60] Arguably more so than in any other dialogue: on this see the analysis by Ross (1951: 228-32); from a different perspective, the

In this respect Vlastos is not quite right when asserting that "the teleological function... in the *Timaeus* pertains exclusively to mind or soul",[61] since perhaps we shouldn't be led to exclude the Ideas from teleological explanations. Borrowing Aristotelian concepts, one could say that in fact two kinds of causality would be implicit in the Platonic concept of "primary cause": the efficient one (exerted by *nous*) and the final one (corresponding to the Ideas to which *nous* looks).[62] Or, in the words of Fine, *nous* ordering things for the best is "an efficient cause with a teleological constituent", so that Ideas could be final causes in the *Timaeus* insofar as they are goals or models of intelligent activity, in a way that makes them, if not efficient causes, at least relevant in the explanation of this kind of efficient causation.[63] If this is so, and despite views to the contrary,[64] the causation exerted by *nous* would not displace any causal role fulfilled by the Ideas[65] -even though they are not explicitly called "causes" in the *Timaeus*- but would rather presuppose it -inasmuch as they are the model to which intelligence must look so as to order the sensible by its desire to make the latter resemble the former. At the same time, intelligence would give true efficacy to any causal role Ideas could perform, insofar as the

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same point is maintained by Teloh (1981: 210, 217-8). Let us recall that the *Timaeus* speaks of the relation between Ideas and sensibles in terms of "paradigms", "copies" and "imitation" (cf. e.g. 28c-29a, 29c, 37c-d, 48e-49a), something that tends to stress, in principle, the ontological distance rather than the "communication" or "participation" between both domains.

[61] Vlastos (1969a: 88).

[62] Cf. López (1963: 146) and Ross (1951: 239) as to the need of both kinds of causation for a cosmological explanation.

[63] Cf. Fine (1987: 90-1, 110-1).

[64] Cf. e.g. De Lacy (1939: 111-2).

[65] For the debate about Forms as causes in the *Phaedo* (e.g. 99b, 100b ff.) and, particularly, about whether Forms are final causes there or relevant at all for the positing of teleological causes cf., in favour, Fine (1987: 111-2), Byrne (1989: 8); *contra*, Vlastos (1969a: 87-8). For Forms taken as formal causes in the *Phaedo* cf. Fine (1987: 97-101), Hitchcock (1985: 71). For the Good interpreted as formal cause in the *Republic* see Hitchcock (*ibidem*); as final cause, see Dye (1978: 54-6).

causality of *nous* makes it possible to fulfil an end through a chain of mechanical means thus attenuating the *chôrismos* that would otherwise exist between Ideas and sensibles.[66] And it is this efficient role of intelligence, rather than any efficient role of the Ideas, that is emphasized in the concept of primary cause in the *Timaeus*.

Given, then, that the Demiurge is or symbolizes a *nous* which can on no account be identified with the Ideas but is dependent on them in the *Timaeus* ontology, let us now analyse more precisely the ontological status of this *nous*, particularly in relation to the world and its soul.

2. What kind of nous is the Demiurge?

In this respect, there have been two main lines of interpretation:

1) that which takes the Demiurge to be separate from the world and its soul, *i.e.* over and above it;
2) that which interprets the Demiurge to be *in* the world, in the sense of being totally or partially identical with the World-Soul.[67]

The first interpretation can in turn take two forms:

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[66] In this respect I can agree with Lennox when he states that "participation... understood as a relation between copy and paradigm in virtue of which the copy may bear the name of the paradigm, is not something which occurs independently of an intelligent agent aiming to achieve some good" ([1985: 213]; cf. also Fine [1987: 111] for the need of an agent for paradigms to be teleological *aitiai*). That the image of the Demiurge can provide a way to account for *how* participation between two heterogeneous ontological domains such as the Ideas and sensibles is at all possible -a question so critically posed in the *Parmenides*, 133c-134e- was already suggested by several scholars such as Taylor (1928: 646); Cherniss (1932: 237); Solmsen (1942: 103) -see also Prior (1985: 96); and I shall take up this question again *infra*, section 2.2.2.

[67] For total identification see Theiler (1925: 69-73, esp. 72), Bury (1929: 10), Festugière (1947: 20-1), (1949: 104-5), Claghorn (1954: 119), Grube (1980: 170). For partial identification see Cornford (1937: 205, 208), Morrow (1950: 437) and Ostenfeld (1982: 246).

1.a. the Demiurge is an independent *nous* which is completely separate from every kind of soul;[68]
1.b. the Demiurge is a *nous* with a soul of its own, but different and separate from the world and its soul.[69]

I shall try to argue against 1) in its two forms in order to defend 2).

2.1. Is the Demiurge an independent nous, separate from the world and its soul?

2.1.a. If we suppose so, and think in addition that this *nous* is separate from every kind of soul, we have to face several difficulties.

(i) First, we are led to an antinomy:
-*Thesis*: If the Demiurge embodies *nous* and, according to the mythical description, he is the creator of soul -as the defenders of this view claim-, then the Demiurge should be a *nous* separate and ontologically prior to soul.
-*Antithesis*: If soul is the only principle of motion (*Phaedrus* 245c ff., *Laws* X 896a-b, something certainly suggested at *Tim.* 46c7-e2, cf. 37b5), and *nous* partakes of motion (*Tim.* 34a, cf. *Laws* X 897c ff.),[70] soul should be ontologically prior to *nous*.[71]

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[68] Cf. Hackforth (1936: 439 ff.) (strongly criticized by Cherniss [1944: 606-8]); after him Solmsen (1942: 113, 115); Brisson (1974: 81-4); Guthrie (1978: 215, 275 n. 1); Mohr (1985: 183); Menn (1992: 556, 558).
[69] Cf. Taylor (1928: 64, 77, 82); Skemp (1942: 114); López (1963: 177-8); Demos (1968: 145); T.M. Robinson (1969: 251 ff.), (1970: 103), (1986: 145 n. 1).
[70] Both these characteristics (self-motion of soul and motion of *nous*) are paradoxically admitted by supporters of the view we are criticizing, such as Hackforth (1936: 446) and Brisson (1974: 333 ff.).
[71] Cf. Bury (1929: 9). I speak of A as "ontologically prior" to B in the sense of A being able to exist independently from B, but not viceversa (cf. Aristotle, *Metaph.* V 11, 1019a2-4, who interestingly refers to Plato in this context).

It seems that we should prefer the second conclusion, because it is supported by non-mythical texts,[72] whereas the first one just limits itself to the mythical description. In addition, there is in fact further textual evidence for the view that *nous* is a faculty of soul which cannot exist without it:

(ii) Plato recurrently stresses, both in the *Timaeus* and in other late dialogues, that *nous* cannot exist without soul. So in *Tim.* 30b3 we read that "it is impossible for intellect to belong to anything separately from soul" (*noun d'au chôris psuchês adunaton paragenesthai tôi*). That this claim is general, or valid for *anything* (*tôi*) seems fairly clear from the text,[73] and it is by virtue of this general validity that the claim will then be applied to the specific case of the *nous* in the world (that is why god "framed *nous* in soul, and soul in body", *Tim.* 30b4-5). An equally general claim, applying to any *nous*, is found in *Phil.* 30c9-10: "wisdom and intellect could *never* arise without soul" (*sophia mên kai nous aneu psuchês ouk an pote genoisthên*) and *Soph.* 249a, where *nous* and life are made to reside in soul.

In addition, we tend to find *nous* described not as an entity different from soul or separate from it, but just as a state or faculty of soul, namely soul's power of knowing the Ideas (*Tim.* 37a-c; cf. *Rep.* VI 508d4-6). In the *Timaeus* (37a6, c1-5) we read that, when soul is in contact with the indivisible, and its discourse deals with the rational (the Ideas), then "intellect and

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[72] Note that, according to this, Mohr's (1985: 182-3) endorsement of the view that *nous* can exist independently of soul and does not have to do with becoming or change seems untenable (as much as his suggestion that at *Laws* 897-898 it is rational *soul* -as different from *nous*- that has motion; cf. the explicit mention of *nou kinêsis kai periphora* at *Laws* 897c5-6 and *nou periodos* at 898a5). For criticism of Mohr see also T.M. Robinson (1995: xx-xxi).

[73] *Pace* Hackforth's attempt to circumscribe it not to *nous* but to what has *nous*: the world (1936: 445); followed by Brisson (1974: 83).

knowledge of necessity is achieved" (*nous epistêmê te ex anankês apoteleitai*). It is true that in the context Plato is speaking of the World-Soul, but he adds a clause that makes the point general: "But if anyone should ever say that it is in any of the things which exist, except soul, that these two states come about, he will be saying anything but the truth" (37c3-5).

In this way *nous* turns out to be logically and ontologically dependent on soul, since it would seem that it cannot be explained without soul nor can it be ontologically separate from soul.

2.1.b. Now, perhaps for these reasons many scholars, still wanting to preserve the "transcendence" of the Demiurge as a personal God have been inclined to maintain that the Demiurge is an ensouled *nous*, though his soul is distinct from and superior to the World-Soul.[74] In what follows I shall mention three difficulties that this view entails, though the arguments can equally be applied against 2.1.a, *i.e.* against *any* position that makes the Demiurge separate from and over and above the world, whether he be ensouled or not.

(i) If we have two *nous*, *i.e.* that of the Demiurge, and that of the World-Soul, we seem to be duplicating entities,[75] if, as we shall see, both of them would be performing the same functions of contemplating the Ideas on the one hand and ruling over the universe on the other hand (cf. *infra* section 2.2). It seems rather more economical to suppose that there is just one *nous* in the structure of reality, and that the mythical image of the Demiurge can be subsumed into the -non-mythical- *nous* in the world, the motions of which in the heavens we can learn (*Tim.* 47b-c, 90c-d) and whose existence Plato tries

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74 Cf. the scholars mentioned in note 69.
75 Compare here the suggestion of Archer-Hind (1888: 38-9).

to prove in other contexts (cf. e.g. *Phil.* 28e ff.; *Laws* XII 966d-967a with 967e1).

(ii) If we admit that the Demiurge is a mediator or link between transcendent Ideas (which are immutable, 38a3) and our sensible moving world, we meet a real paradox if we make this *nous* as separate as those Ideas it tries to connect to our world. In other words, god's *nous* would be *chôris*, instead of filling in the *chôrismos* between Ideas and sensibles, and we would then have a new problem of "dualism" to solve: What would the relation of this separate *nous* be to the world and its soul? Rather than providing a way out of the problem of separation, as the Demiurge initially seemed to, we would thus be duplicating it. However, as we shall see in the *Politicus*, the *chôrismos* from god, who there again appears as a *dêmiourgos* (273b1), seems to be the state when that god is not governing the cosmos (*Pol.* 273c-d: If/when the universe is separated from god, increasing disorder takes place). If, however, one of the properties of the demiurgic god is to rule in the cosmos (cf. *Tim.* 48a), he should not be separate.

(iii) Finally, let us notice that:
-If the Demiurge is a *nous*, he is in motion (from *Tim.* 34a, cf. *Laws* X 897c).
-But motion presupposes space. (This is implied by *Tim.* 34a, where the motion of *nous* is described as occurring in the same [place] (*en tôi autôi*).[76] More explicitly, it is stated in *Laws* X 893c1-2 that "whatever moves [psychic motion is being included]... moves in a place").
-In turn, space implies body, since there is no void in the universe (*Tim.* 58a).
From this we could infer that the Demiurge should not only be ensouled, but also in a body.

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[76] In this passage of the *Timaeus* rotatory motion is mentioned as the one which is especially concerned with *nous* (cf. *peri noun kai phronêsin malista ousan,* 34a2-3) and not just a mere model or analogy for the motion of *nous* (as contended by Lee [1976: 73]).

Now, the body he is in should be:
(a) either different from and exterior to the World-Body; but this is impossible, for there is nothing outside the World-Body, rather there is just one single material universe (*Tim.* 31a, 32c-33d); or
(b) immanent to the universe.
Having rejected the first possibility we are left with the second, and this body god is in should be the whole Body of the Universe, since god governs and exerts his influence over the whole cosmos. But the only thing that is said to pervade the World-Body in the *Timaeus* is the World-Soul (34b, 36e).[77] Hence we could conclude that the Demiurge should be taken as the latter.

2.2. Does the Demiurge stand for the World-Soul (or Intelligence in the World-Soul)?

In the previous analysis I have tried to pave the way for adopting this view, and now I shall try to defend it further by focusing on the striking similarities of function that both the Demiurge and the World-Soul would be performing in a perpetual universe, to such an extent that they seem to be fulfilled by the same entity.

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[77] For the closer relation between soul and body in the later dialogues (cf. *supra*, Introd., section 2), see e.g. *Phaedrus* 245c ff., where the "new" definition of soul as the principle of motion seems to imply that it is the principle of the motion *of something*; and though soul can be the principle of its own psychic states (such as those mentioned in a similar context in *Laws* X 896e8-897a4), the union of soul with body (as its principle of motion) is nonetheless stressed, particularly at 245e4-6: "all body...which itself from itself has motion from within, is animate, since this is precisely the nature of soul" (*hôs tautês ousês phuseôs psuchês*), *i.e.* the essence of soul seems to consist in animating a body through the motion that it imparts to it from within. On this general point compare the treatment of Ostenfeld (1987: 21-2, 33), (1990). It is also noteworthy that in the *Timaeus* not even human reason is separate from a body, even in the most blessed state it can achieve, for in the latter case the reward consists, according to the myth, not in the detachment from all body but, conversely, in going to dwell in the incorruptible body of a star (42b2-5, cf. 90a).

(i) As to the ***mediating role***, we have seen that it seems to be mythically performed by the Demiurge (insofar as he connects the heterogeneous domains of Ideas and sensibles, 29a, e ff.). But, on the other hand, the text seems to allot the same role pre-eminently to the World-Soul, the ontological constitution of which is described in the *Timaeus* as intermediate between the indivisible or intelligible and the divisible or sensible,[78] being therefore *partly* akin to the Ideas and *partly* akin to the sensible things (35a1-b1). And so, by virtue of its twofold nature, it can act as a bridge between these two realms and connect them, as we shall see next.

(ii) As to the ***contemplative and efficient functions*** that, as we have noted, mythically characterize the Demiurge, we find that in fact they are performed by the World-Soul by virtue of its twofold nature.

-On the one hand, the World-Soul has an *intellectual knowledge* of the Ideal order (cf. 37a-c), insofar, we could say, as the World-Soul partakes of the indivisible (35a).

-On the other, insofar as it partakes of "the divisible *ousia* which becomes in the case of bodies" (35a2-3), it *moves*, and it does so in -perpetual- order (37a-b);[79] and this is how, we can infer, it can project the Ideal order onto the sensible realm.[80] In other words, the World-Soul performs an efficient function both of generating order (if we grant that it is a principle of motion, in the

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[78] More precisely, this passage of the *Timaeus* describes the World-Soul as composed of a mixture of three elements: existence (*ousia*), identity (*auton*) and difference (*thateron*), each of which is intermediate between the indivisible (*ameriston*) and the divisible (*meriston*). For this interpretation (and the reading of the passage, which varies from Burnet's at 35a4) see Grube (1932; also 1980: 142), followed by Cornford (1937: 59-61) and now generally accepted.

[79] Here we read that soul turns upon itself -which implies orderly motion-: *autê te anakukloumenê pros hautên,* 37a5; it grasps what has dispersed or indivisible existence when *kinoumenê dia pasês heautês,* 37a6-7; it is *to kinoumenon huph' hautou,* 37b5.

[80] Cf. Festugière (1947: 21), (1949: 103).

light of *Tim.* 37b5 and 46d-e),[81] and of governing the universe (*Tim.* 34c), as does the Demiurge.

(iii) As to the ***function of primary causation***, we have seen the Demiurge to be a symbol of it, but we still had to find out *which entity* fulfils this function. And we can now realize that, in point of fact, it is *soul* that is said to embody the role of primary causation: At *Tim.* 46d-e, where we have seen a distinction between two kinds of causes, primary and secondary, the latter is said to have to do with bodies, and the former with *logos and nous*, because "among entities (*tôn ontôn*), soul is the only one for which it is appropriate to possess *nous*" (46d5-6).

This view is in turn developed in *Laws* X, where, speaking of primary and secondary motion instead of primary and secondary causality, Plato characterizes the motion of soul as the primary cause of all the other kinds of motion and as a primary motion which, associated with *nous*, makes use of (*chrômenê*) the secondary motions of bodies in order to guide everything rightly and happily (cf. 895b, 896e-897b).

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[81] These are in fact passages that remind us of the theory of the soul as self-mover and principle of motion developed in *Phaedrus* 245c ff. and *Laws* X (e.g. 896a-b). In the first place, 46d-e draws a contraposition between secondary causes, "which occur by other things being moved and in turn moving other things by necessity" (46e1-2) and "the first causes of the wise nature" (46d8), in a way that suggests that the latter are the principle of the former (cf. *supra*, note 44), something that is reinforced in the light of the analogous contraposition in *Phaedrus* 245c and *Laws* X 896a-b. Also recalling the notion of soul as self-mover in these passages, in *Tim.* 37b5 soul is called "that which is moved by itself" (*to kinoumenon huph' hautou*). Cf. Cherniss (1944: 428 ff., 455), (1954: 26 n. 24); Brisson (1974: 335-6). For other scholars in favour of the theory of soul as self-mover and *archê kinêseôs* as being present in the *Timaeus*, cf. Robin (1938: 165-6), Morrow (1950: 437); against, see Vlastos (1939: 390-9), Herter (1957: 330), Demos (1968: 143 ff.), T.M. Robinson (1969: 249), Mohr (1985: 174).

Thus we can see that it is the teleological action of soul, *qua* rational, which leans on mechanism and subordinates it by using it as a means towards an end. In other words, it is soul, and particularly the World-Soul,[82] that performs the role of primary causality that we had seen symbolized by the Demiurge.

In sum, for the several reasons expounded, I feel inclined to believe that, if the Demiurge symbolizes *nous*, he does so not as a separate entity but as representing the rational character that essentially belongs to the World-Soul.

This conclusion might however seem to need further elucidation, for one could wonder whether *nous*, or that "rational character", is wholly or only partly identical with the World-Soul. And the answer should be that, unlike human beings, in the case of the cosmos Soul and Intellect completely coincide. In other words, the World-Soul[83] is exclusively rational and lacks any "irrational" faculties,[84] as many passages in the *Timaeus* suggest. First, the World-Soul is described as having the same nature as human individual reason, only with a greater degree of purity (41d). Secondly, the World-Soul as a whole is said to have an *"emphrôn bios* for the whole of

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[82] As I shall argue also to be the case as regards *Laws* X 896e-897b *infra,* in chapter 7.

[83] As well as the souls of the heavenly bodies; cf. *infra,* ch.3, section 1.

[84] *Pace* Morrow (1950: 437), who thinks that the disorderly motion in the *Timaeus* derives from the irrational part of the World-Soul, and Cornford (1937: 205, 208) who supposes that the source of that irrational motion is the Circle of the Other, considered in abstraction from the Circle of the Same (cf. also Robin [1938: 166]). Apart from the evidence we are considering, we must remember that only after its constitution is the "mixture" of the World-Soul divided into two Circles, which have therefore the same nature; cf. Cherniss (1944: 410 n. 339), (1954: 26, n. 28); Ostenfeld (1982: 328, n. 171). So I cannot agree with Cornford in his suggestion that the Demiurge symbolizes *just* "Reason in the World-Soul" as a distinct part of it identical with the Circle of the Same (1937: 39, 361, 208).

time" (36e4-5). Thirdly, Plato often characterizes the motion with which Soul moves the body of the universe as the motion of *nous* in the heavens (34a, 47b7, 89a1-3, 90c8-d1), so here we can see that he speaks of the World-Soul and the World-Intellect indifferently.[85] For this same reason, it is no wonder that in many passages it is soul that is ascribed the functions that we have seen to pertain to *nous*, such as governing (*Tim.* 34c, *Laws* X 892a, 896c; as well as that of imposing order, *Laws* X 898c, 899b, cf. *Crat.* 400a).

III. CONCLUSION

In this chapter we have examined the meaning and status of the Demiurge on the basis of an interpretation of creation as a beginningless and perpetual process, according to which god appears as constantly generating and sustaining the universe as orderly. In this context, I have argued for -what would seem- two theses:

I. That the Demiurge is a symbol of the function of *primary causation.*

II. That the Demiurge is a symbol of the World-Soul.

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[85] In a very narrow sense, though, *nous* could be said to be just the upper faculty of soul by which it knows the Ideas, as opposed to the lower faculty of *doxa* by which it apprehends sensibles at *Tim.* 37a-c -and it is through this role of knowing the Ideas that the Circle of the Same is called the "most intelligent" (*phronimôtatês*) revolution, 39c2. However, not even the lower function of *doxa* could in this case be said to be "irrational", for let us remember that the World-Soul has *doxai* which are *bebaioi kai alêtheis* (37b8). *Tim.* 43d ff. (esp. 44a-b) suggests that any true judgements about the sensible (which make the holder of the judgement rational, *emphrôn*) should be guaranteed by the ruling role of the Circle of the Same; though Plato can still say that mere *orthê doxa* is *alogos*, as he claims for the majority of men at 51e (cf. 27d5-28a4). But the World-Soul opines not only "truly" but "stably" at 37b8 -stability being a feature that was initially reserved for the Ideas at 29b6-, thus suggesting that its *doxa* is not *alogos*: the World-Soul would have *logos* insofar as, by knowing the Ideas, it can, when apprehending the sensible, give an account of it in the light of the knowledge of that after which the sensible is copied.

These two theses have been regarded not only as different but sometimes also as incompatible, e.g. by Cherniss,[86] who criticizes Festugière for holding the latter view instead of the former. However, I would like to suggest that, far from being mutually exclusive, the two theses are just two aspects of the same thesis. For I. just alludes to a function which needs an entity to perform it, which is found in II. Or, in other words, I. corresponds to the philosophical and abstract meaning of the figure of the Demiurge, but this meaning cannot be fully understood unless we refer it to the entity that embodies it. The complete correspondence between these two levels is made evident in *Laws* X (895d-896b), where we are told that "the motion with the power to move itself" -which has the function of primary causation, 894b ff.- is the definition -*logos*- which "refers" (cf. *prosagoreuomen*) to the same entity (*ousia*) which we call "soul". And we have seen that the *Timaeus* too emphasizes *soul* as the only *entity* which can have *nous* -and therefore operate as primary cause- in contrast with causes which are devoid of all wisdom (46d-e).

From this perspective, I. and II. are wholly complementary and must go indispensably together. For that reason I have tried to argue that the Demiurge is a symbol of the teleological function of primary causation which is mainly fulfilled by the World-Soul in Plato's structure of reality.

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[86] Cherniss (1950: 207 n.1.), where he reviews Festugière (1949). Cf. also Tarán (1971: 407 n. 164).

CHAPTER 3

COSMIC GOD AND HUMAN REASON IN THE *TIMAEUS*

So far I have been arguing that the Demiurge's teleological function is symbolized *mainly* by the World-Soul. By this I do not discard that, secondarily, his action can also in reality be fulfilled by the souls of the heavenly bodies, which have similarly cosmic influence and the same nature as the World-Soul,[1] and which are subordinate to it in a way that recalls the subordination of the lesser demiurges to the main Artisan. In order to support this claim I shall be looking at allusions both to the World, or *Nous* in the World, as god, and to the heavenly bodies as gods, in a manner that could reflect the initial anthropomorphic distinction between the Demiurge as main god and the other lesser gods involved in the creation of the cosmos. We can also wonder why human reason is not called god -though it is called divine and a *daimôn*- and this will lead us to clarify the relation between the latter and god in the cosmic sense which will strengthen our understanding of his role as both a mediator -this time, I shall be arguing, between human beings and the Ideas- and as a model for human reason in general.

I. THE COSMIC GODS

Let us start with the first issue. We have seen that god in the *Timaeus*, in his mythical appearance, is embodied in the figure of the Demiurge; as far as his philosophical meaning is concerned, I have argued that "god", *qua* Demiurge, represents a function of intelligent, teleological causation; finally, as far as

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[1] As is shown by the fact that they haven't given rise to a new mixture.

his ontological status is concerned, I have proposed that the Demiurge is a symbol of the World-Soul, or soul at a cosmic level in general, which could also include the heavenly bodies. Let us first examine the textual basis for the claim I want to make, namely that the World-Soul and the heavenly bodies are gods. To address this issue I shall analyse briefly the different levels of divinity in the structure of reality as presented in the *Timaeus*.

1. Nous in the World or the Universe as god

Even though there is no explicit allusion to the World-Soul as *theos* in the *Timaeus*, it is said that it started a "divine beginning (*theian archên*) of endless and intelligent life for the whole of time" (36e4-5), and its status as god can be inferred from the allusions both to Cosmic *Nous* and to the Universe as god.

Thus, at *Tim.* 47b6-c4 we are told that we have been given vision "so that, when contemplating the revolutions of intellect in heaven (*en ouranôi tou nou...periodous*) we can use them for the revolutions of reason within us... and that, by imitating the revolutions of god, which are totally unwandering (*tas tou theou pantôs aplaneis ousas*) we might settle down the wandering revolutions within ourselves". The context seems to suggest that "god" in the latter clause refers to intellect in heaven (both being the subject to whom the revolutions we should imitate belong), and this would accord with 90c-d, where, for the same purpose of correcting the revolutions of our thought, we are encouraged to follow and learn the "*reasonings and revolutions* of the All" (*hai tou pantos dianoêseis kai periphorai*, c8-d1) (*i.e.* not just the physical visible motions of the corporeal universe but the intellections in which the motions of its soul consist).

Obviously, the *nous* at 47b7 which is alluded to as god at c3 is the Cosmic *Nous*, since it is *en ouranôi;* and we have at the end of the previous chapter seen that Plato in the *Timaeus* often characterizes the motion with which Soul moves the body of the universe as the motion of *nous* in the heavens (cf. e.g. 89a2-3, 90c-d), so that, in this respect, the World-Soul is identical with the World-Intellect. If this is so, affirming the divinity of the latter would be tantamount to affirming the divinity of the former. So, because of its World-Soul, the proper motion of the universe's body is said to be the motion which particularly belongs to *nous,* namely rotation moving "regularly in the same place and on itself" (*kata tauta en tôi autôi kai en heautôi,* 34a3). But we can see also that not only does *nous* exist *en psuchêi* but also *psuchê* exists *en sômati* (30b4-5), so that the divinity of *nous* is in fact embodied in the whole *zôion empsuchon ennoun* (30b8), *i.e.* the whole corporeal universe which it animates. This is, then, why we find Plato asserting that the universe is a god.[2] It is for example called "happy god" at 34b8; "self-sufficient and most complete god" at 68e3-4; "sensible god which is an image of the intelligible" at 92c7. Surely, this god is called "sensible" (92c7) insofar as it has a body, since soul as such is invisible (36e6). In this way, when we affirm the divinity of *Nous* we are referring to an aspect of the *kosmos* that our analysis isolates, but which in point of fact does not exist without a body, therefore constituting the basis of the divinity of the sensible world itself.

This living universe, which encompasses all other living beings, is "a sensible god... greatest and best and most fine and complete" (*theos aisthêtos, megistos kai aristos kallistos te kai teleôtatos,* 92c7-8), and so the major

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[2] Cf. Solmsen (1942: 118); Festugière (1947: 22). At *Laws* XII 966d ff. impiety is associated with the belief that the universe is purely materialistic.

god among sensible beings,[3] at a *singular* level of divinity; whereas the heavenly bodies and the Earth will come after it as a *plural* level, as we shall now see.

2. The heavenly bodies as gods

At *Tim.* 39e10 Plato refers to the "heavenly class of gods" (*ouranion theôn genos*), in a passage that makes successive allusion to the fixed stars (40a2-b6), the planets (40b6-8, cf. 38c ff.) and the Earth, which is called "the first and oldest of the gods which have been born in the universe" (40c2-3). All these are referred to as "visible and generated gods" (*theoi horatoi kai gennêtoi*, 40d4) in the plural, and are also living beings endowed with intelligent soul and a body.

So, the stars are called "divine and perpetual living beings" at 40b5, and are said to think (*dianoein*) always the same at 40a8-b1. So too the planets are said to have life and soul (their bodies having been bound with psychic bonds, 38e5), and their possession of intelligence is implied by their learning (*manthanein*) what was prescribed to them (38e6), -surely their own celestial motions, in the light of 36d4-5. It is, then, again their possession of *nous* that we can take as a foundation of their divinity, and we can see how that exercise of *nous* is constant in a way that is manifested in regular behaviour: Each star moves "in the same place and regularly, thinking always the same things for itself about the same things" (*peri tôn autôn aei ta auta heautôi dianooumenôi*, 40a8-b1) (the latter, we could suppose, are the Ideas). This text is most enlightening also in the sense that not only the World-Soul, as we have seen, but also the heavenly bodies seem to have the twofold functions of having *intellectual* contemplation,

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[3] Cf. Reverdin (1945: 47); Moreau (1939: 81). See also *ton megiston theon kai holon ton kosmon*, *Laws* VII 821a2; for my reading of this phrase cf. *infra*, chapter 7, n. 32.

on the one hand, and inextricably *moving* in an orderly fashion. With this we confirm that whatever order we observe in the heavens (including that of the motion of the planets, which do not actually "wander", since each of them follows one single circular path according to proportion)[4] is due to and evinces the presence of *nous*. And given their properties of intellection and motion (cf.38e, 40a-b), which they share with the World-Soul, it is no wonder that the heavenly bodies can also act as primary causes.

We must remember in this respect that the gods to whom the Demiurge delegates the task of framing the mortal parts of the universe (in accordance with his teleological plan of making the universe complete in the resemblance of the *teleon zôion*) are those generated by him, *i.e.* the heavenly bodies themselves -and also the traditional gods, probably as their counterparts (41a-c).[5]

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[4] Though Plato uses the word *planên* at 40b6, he seems basically to be keeping to the traditional denomination. In fact the *Timaeus* doesn't suggest at all that the planets divert from their route, but would conversely stress that, despite the complexity of their motions, they all follow the route of the different orbits into which the Circle of the Other was divided (see e.g. 36d; 38c7-8; and 39c-d where *planas* at 39d1 seems to be used ironically in a context that would conversely stress the regularity of the courses of the planets as measures of time). Cf. Vlastos (1975: 99-100, 101-2), (1980: 24-5 n. 26). The protest against thinking that planets "wander" is explicitly found in *Laws* VII 822a, the reason being adduced that "each of them traverses the same route, *i.e.* not many but always one single route in a circle" (a6-8).

[5] Plato introduces his allusion to the gods of the traditional mythologies at *Tim.* 40d6-e3, after finishing his account of the visible -cosmic- gods. Even though this passage has usually been taken to be ironical (Taylor [1928: *ad loc.*]; Cornford [1937: 139]; Vlastos [1939: 381]; Reverdin [1945: 53]), it is interesting to note the positive role that the text subsequently allocates to them. For *both* types of divinity -*i.e.* both heavenly bodies and traditional gods- are commended to frame the mortal aspects of the universe and govern the mortal being, since the Demiurge in the myth is said to address, for that purpose, *all* (*pantes*) the gods that had *genesis*, "both those which revolve evidently [=stars] and those who appear in whatever way they wish [=traditional gods]" (41a3-6). (That the Demiurge is in some way responsible for the creation of all of them, including the latter, is suggested by his advising them to perform their *dêmiourgia* by imitating the power that he used in creating them, 41c5-6.) In this respect, it is remarkable that the gods of the traditional religion share with the astral gods the same

Even though they appear in the myth with an *anthropomorphic* role of "creation" (*dêmiourgia*, 41c4-5) -and also "nurture" (*trophê*, 41d2), making grow (cf. *auxanete*, 41d3) and ruling or piloting (*diakubernan*, 42e3)- of mortal beings, that role could be interpreted more astronomically in the sense of the active role that the heavenly bodies -and particularly the Sun- have as to the generation, growth and nurture (*genesin kai auxên kai trophên*) of life on the Earth (*Rep.* VI 509b2-4),[6] thus ruling (*epitropeuôn*) and being the cause (*aitios*) of things there (*Rep.* VII 516b9-c2).

At the same time, a correlation between Demiurge-lesser gods on the one hand, and World-Soul-heavenly bodies on the other, seems to hold also in the sense that in both cases the divinity shows a one-many aspect in which a single major god prevails or rules over the lesser ones. So, in the same way as the Demiurge was said to give

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responsibility in the intelligent and telelogical organization of the cosmos -at 47d, e.g., it is the Muses who are said to be responsible for the donation of harmony-, so that Plato would be here redefining the nature of those gods according to his own conception of divinity (as he had tried to do also in *Rep.* II 377d ff.). Cf. Solmsen (1942: 118). In this guise, both traditional and astral gods seem to be here identical at least as far as their cosmogonic function in the universe is concerned. In addition, we must notice that heaven and earth appear in a double aspect, first as "cosmic gods" created by the Demiurge (*ouranos* at 34b5-8, *gê* at 40b8-c3), then, in a personified way, as the first link of the genealogy from which the other traditional gods proceed (*Gês te kai Ouranou*, 40e5); cf. Taylor (1938: 184). Hence we can suppose that the latter are being thought of as the traditional counterpart of the former, in what we could interpret as an attempt by Plato not to exclude but to integrate the traditional inheritance into his own cosmic religion. This attempt is already visible in the *Phaedrus* -246e-, where Zeus appears with the functions of *epimeleisthai* and *diakosmein panta* which in more cosmological contexts belong to the World-Soul, and seems to reappear, as I shall argue, in other late cosmological passages, e.g. *Pol.* 272b, where the god who presently rules the cosmos is called "Zeus" -though also described demiurgically as *theos ho kosmêsas [ton kosmon]* 273d; *Phil.* 30d, where the cosmos itself seems to be called Zeus; and *Laws* X 904e, where the powers in charge of the universe are described in terms of "the gods who dwell in Olympus". It is also noteworthy that in the *Laws* both the heavenly bodies (VII 821c6-d4) and the traditional gods (IV 717a-b) are recommended to be worshipped.

[6] Cf. Cornford (1937: 141).

orders to the young gods (cf. 42d, 41a ff.), and to have a ruling role -which can be seen as the prevailing of a unitarian teleological design in the whole universe- so is the World-Soul (or the Circle of the Same)[7] said to prevail over the motions of the heavenly bodies (see *kratos* 36c7, cf. 39a1-2, 40b2),[8] apart from the overall power that it exerts on the sensible or the World-Body as such (34b10-35a1). In this way, the structure of the cosmos itself shows relations between its different levels of divinity which are analogous to those which were initially depicted demiurgically.[9]

II. THE COSMIC GOD AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN THE HUMAN SOUL AND THE IDEAS

1. God, Ideas and the human soul

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[7] As Cornford (1937: 79) has observed, "the motion of the Same is both a proper self-motion of the World-Soul, manifested physically as the axial rotation of the whole body of the world, and also an imparted motion" which affects the heavenly bodies. Cf. note 8.

[8] Astronomically, this seems to imply that the World-Soul imparts to the heavenly bodies a motion of forward rotation along the outer orbit of the Same (in the case of the Fixed Stars, 40b1-2), which, by coinciding with the axial rotation of the whole celestial sphere (alluded to at 34a), also carries round -and in that sense prevails over, 39a1-2- all the inner planetary circles contained in the sphere, which can however still have the motion of the Other in the opposite direction to that of the Same. (This latter phenomenon results in the spiral twist of the planets because they have two different motions in opposite directions, 39a4-b2.) Cf. Cornford -after Proclus- (1937: 76, 78-9); Heath (1913: 160). Thus, the Circle of the Same is called *hê exô phora* at 36c4, and the World-Soul is said to pervade and envelop the World-Body from the centre and even from the outside (*exôthen*) at 34b and 36e; so we should think that the outer motion of the circumference of the universe (*i.e.* that of the Same) coincides with the whole rotation of the sphere on its own axis. This would also carry with it the planetary orbits into which the Circle of the Other is split -since the Circle of the Other is said to be joined with the Circle of the Same, 36c1- even though they also go in the opposite direction (36c).

[9] Note also that in both cases there is imitation of the major god by the lesser gods: the young gods try to *imitate* their father in their task of creation (41c5, 42e8, 69c5); the shape of the heavenly bodies was made round by *imitation* of the universe (40a4).

We have thus seen how the World (and therefore its Soul) and heavenly bodies are gods in the cosmic structure of the *Timaeus*, and how both these kinds of soul can be seen to perform a function of intelligent causation, being exclusively and essentially rational and good. If we take these latter characteristics to be a defining feature of "god", we can then understand why, save for one problematic passage,[10] the Ideas are not called *theos* in the *Timaeus*, since, as we have seen, they are static and intelligible, not intelligent.[11] They are, however, the highest level of reality, even superior to god (as Plato suggests here, *Tim.* 29a; and also at *Phaedrus* 249c5-6, 247d, cf. its anticipation in *Eut.* 10a) and in the last resort the foundation of god's divinity, since the latter lies in *nous* and *nous* would not exist without the Ideas (cf. e.g. *Tim.* 37a-c), which are its object and enjoy ontological priority over it. (In the *Phaedrus* we read that Ideas are those things "by being in front of which god is divine", *pros hoisper theos ôn theios estin*, 249c5-6.) However, Plato does call the Ideas "divine" (*theia*), a concept which is wider than that of god - applying, in the myth of the *Timaeus*, mainly to the Ideas, god and human reason- and is used basically of *"immortal"* entities, with positive axiological

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[10] The passage is *Tim.* 37c6-7, where the world is called *tôn aidiôn theôn gegonos agalma,* something that could be read as meaning that the world is an image of gods which are the Ideas (taking *agalma* as a synonym of *eikôn* and opposed to *paradeigma* in the light of 37c7-8, 37d1, 37d5-7); however Cornford (1937: 99-102) has argued that an *agalma* is not simply an image but a place intended for occupation by a god or gods, thus a kind of "shrine". So he translates 37c6-7 as "a shrine brought into being for the everlasting gods", the latter being the heavenly bodies or celestial gods of 39e10, which will be called *aidia* at 40b5.

[11] This however does not exclude that the Ideas could correspond to another aspect of the Judaeo-Christian conception of "God", since, as Grube (1980: 151-2) has remarked, God can be thought of -statically- as the ultimate reality, the absolute being, or -dynamically- as a creator and source of all life and movement. These two aspects usually go hand in hand in this conception of God. In the *Timaeus*, however, the former aspect would correspond to the Ideas, the latter to a superhuman *nous*, and it is this that Plato tends to call *theos*.

connotations.[12] The Ideas are called in the *Politicus* "the most divine of all things" (*tois pantôn theiotatois*, 269d6), and this could rightly apply to the *Timaeus*, since, we could say, only Ideas are immortal, or eternal,[13] in their own right (*de iure*), whereas the immortality of god, as well as that of human reason, is meant to be contingent (*i.e., de facto* but not *de iure*), insofar as it depends on a higher source (cf. *Tim.* 41a-b, 43d).

Now, if rationality is that which seems to define god, we can also wonder whether human beings or human reason could be called *theos* by the same token. However we find that Plato does not call them *theos*.

In the first place, we can see that, whereas the universe and the heavenly bodies are called *theoi* with the characteristic that they are immortal both with respect to their soul (36e) and their body (33a), the human being, conversely, is not immortal in all the elements of his composition. Human reason,[14] in fact, is said to be

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[12] Cf. Mugnier (1930: 116-7). For *'theios'* applied to the Ideas see 90c1; to god in its different aspects or referents, 68d4, 76b2; 68e7, 36e4, 40a2, 40b5; to human reason, 90c4, 8, 73a7, c7, 88b2, 69d, 72d (in these latter two passages *theion* is contrasted with *thnêton*, an opposition parallel to that between *athanaton-thnêton* at e.g. 41c-d, 42e-43a, 69c-d, etc.). Plato also applies the term derivatively to that which contains human reason, and so he calls our head "divine" (44d5), since it is "the abode of what is most divine and sacred" (*tên tou theiotatou kai hierôtatou oikêsin,* 45a1).

[13] For the attribute of immortality applied to the Ideas cf. *infra*, section 2.2. This feature is rather anthropomorphic, though more precisely Plato will call them "eternal" (*diaiônios*, 38b8, 39e2; cf. Eggers Lan [1984: 175]; T.M. Robinson [1986: 144-5, 149]).

[14] Plato alludes to the immortal part of the human soul in several different ways, that can be translated widely as "reason", "thought", "intellect". So, he calls it *logos* at 42d1, 70a5, d5, 71a3, d4, stressing its function of *kratein* or *hêgemonein* over passions or the other parts of the soul; he also denominates it *dianoia* at 88a8, c2, emphasizing the balance that must exist between exercizing it (e.g. through mathematics) and the body through gymnastics; and at 47b it is to correct the *dianoêseis* in us that we should use the revolutions of *nous* in heaven. Note in these cases that *dianoia* is the suitable term if Plato were trying to stress a capacity for mathematical studies (as he had done in the *Republic*);

immortal and akin to that of the gods (since, though to a lesser degree, it shares their same nature, *Tim*. 41c-d), but, unlike them, it is conjoined with a corruptible body, which will be returned to the four elements (cf. 42e-43a), and has another two psychic faculties, adapted to that body (cf. 69c ff.), which are equally mortal.[15]

Most importantly, the possession of those two lower mortal faculties apart from the rational one, which do not necessarily behave in conformity to it, means for the human being the possession of other possibilities of life apart from the one which is characteristic of the gods as

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though the use of this term, as much as that of *nous*, seems to be loose in the *Timaeus*. Thus e.g. at 71b3, c4 Plato speaks indifferently of *nous* or *dianoia* to refer to the rational part of the soul, as the source from which the thoughts reflected in the liver proceed, and at 92c2 it is the loss or gain of *nous* or *anoia* that determines the transformation of humans into animals and viceversa (the study of philosophy or astronomy being a mark of the presence of *nous*, cf. 91d-e). At some other places, however, *nous* is used more specifically to refer to the capacity or state of cognition of the Ideas, e.g. at 51c-e (cf. also *noêsis* at 28a1, 52a4; and 37c2 where *nous* and *epistêmê* arise in the World-Soul in contact with the Ideas). In other passages he also uses *logismos* (86c3), *phronêsis* or *to phronimon* for the rational part of the soul (75e4, 64b5), and characterizes the one in whom it is working properly as *emphrôn* (44b7), by contrast with its absence which makes someone *anous* (44a8; cf. *anoêtos* at 44c3). In general terms, the rational or divine part of the soul is described as made up, like the World-Soul, of the circle of the Same and that of the Other (cf. 42c, 43d), having by nature the same intervals as the World-Soul (43d, cf. 35b-36b). As in the World-Soul, so in the human rational soul the revolution of the Same has the capacity to rule (cf. *archousa, hêgemôn* 44a4). That allows both, from a theoretical perspective, true judgements (even about the sensibles, 44a) and, from a practical one, the mastering of one's own passions (cf. 42c-d).

[15] *Tim*. 42a3-b1 makes it abundantly clear that *pathêmata* like *thumos* (which will correspond to the spirited part of the soul at 70a) and *erôs* mixed with pleasure and pain (as would be experienced by the lower part of our soul) supervene inevitably when the immortal soul is implanted in bodies to which things come in and from which they go out. That is to say, it is because the mortal body is not self-sufficient that, e.g., the desire for food exists; unlike the immortal Body of the Universe, which is *autarkes* (33c-d, cf. 33a). In this way, whereas the cosmic god seems to be at complete comfort in his body -a real friend to himself, 34b-, which doesn't create for him any needs, for us the body constitutes not only a vehicle (*ochêma*) for reason -as Plato clearly states in the *Timaeus*, 41e2, 69c7, cf. 44d-e: *hupêresia* 44d7, *ochêma* e2- but also, in our earthly life, a potential source of limitation for its continuous activity.

invariably intelligent.[16] So Plato says that "if a man dwells upon appetites (*epithumias*) or ambitions (*philonikias*)" -*i.e.* the predominant desires of the appetitive and spirited parts of the soul respectively, cf. *Tim.* 70d7, 70a3, *Rep.* IX 580e-581b- "and spends intense effort in that, all his opinions must of necessity be mortal"; whereas "if he has devoted himself to the love of knowledge and true thoughts, and exercised these things above all others in him, he must by all necessity think things immortal and divine", be distinctively happy and participate in immortality as far as human nature permits (90b-c).

In this manner, far from being something essential and exclusive, reason becomes in man a possibility that he may or may not exercise -the lack of exercise of which determines what the myth describes as humans' "fall" into lower animals, cf. 42b-d, 91a-92c. That the life of reason is a possibility for man seems also fairly clear from the "conditional decrees" for the destiny of the soul, which establish that *if* the human being rules over his passions he will be just in this life and happy thereafter, but *if* he doesn't, he will be unjust and suffer successive transformations (into women and animals) until he is able to rule with reason his own body and thus return to the first and best condition (42b-d).

Now, if reason is a possibility which needs practice (being also helped by a good education and an appropriate way of government in the *polis*, 44b8-c2, 86d7-e3, 87a7-b9), it can obviously remain unrealized. It not only does not rule in the infant, whose soul is initially *anous* (44a8) but also, if man is negligent, he returns to Hades

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[16] For "tripartition" in the human soul understood in terms of possibilities of life cf. also *Rep.* IX 580d ff., *Phaedrus* 256a-c; on that subject in the *Timaeus* cf. Taylor (1928: *ad* 90b1-6 and 69c7).

unfulfilled and without intelligence (*atelês kai anoêtos*, 44c3).[17]

In fact, human reason is repeatedly called *"theion"* insofar as it is that immortal part of us akin to the gods; it is also called a "*daimôn*" that god has given to us, which dwells in the upper part of our body and elevates us to our abode in heaven (90a), since by the exercise of reason we become similar to god (90d);[18] and this *daimôn* one should care for and keep in good order (*eu kekosmêmenos*) so as to be happy and partake in immortality so far as that is possible (cf. 90c). But, as we have seen, the human being also has the possibility of following the rule of the other faculties of his soul, filling himself with mortal opinions and thus becoming mortal, "to the extent to which it is maximally possible to become mortal" (90b).[19] So, reason being a possibility, it is no wonder that the character of immortality -and similarity with god- which belongs to human reason is also a possibility for man -as suggested in the above passage- but not something guaranteed.

In sum, we can conclude that human reason cannot be called a god because the human being, unlike the gods, does not necessarily and continuously exercise reason and therefore act rationally. For him rationality is not

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[17] That is to say, *anoêtos* would refer to the unfulfilment of the capacity which hasn't been exercised. The capacity, however, seems never itself lost: even if the myth presents the picture of man reincarnating into lower animals, he can still in that state "prevail over through reason" (*logôi kratêsas*, 42d1) the turbulent and unreasoning mass of fire, water and earth that was added to him and thus "reach the form of the first and best condition" (42d2; cf. 92c1-3). Cf. Sorabji (1993: 10).

[18] In this respect human reason as a *daimôn* would keep the feature, which the *Symposium* allots to *to daimonion*, of mediating between man and god (202d13-e1). Cf. Reverdin (1945: 136-8).

[19] The latter qualification may seem striking but we must understand it in the sense that it is not reincarnation into lower animals but freedom from the limitations of a mortal body that Plato regards as the true form of immortality (here symbolized as returning to the body of one's native star, 42b).

something essentially "given", but a task that he must realize. What is at the very most given to him is the *possibility* of realizing it, and this ethical possibility distinguishes him from god.

2. God as a model for human reason

Now, if reason is a capacity that human beings should fulfil, we can ask ourselves how they can manage to do so. This will in turn illuminate the role played by god in this respect.

I shall tackle the issue by addressing three questions:

1) Whether Plato still believes that human beings can have access to the Ideas in the *Timaeus*, or whether it is now only god who can do so.[20]

2) Having argued for the first possibility as far as a privileged minority of people is concerned, how they can achieve it.

3) What second best is left for men other than philosophers in order to be happy.

I wish to argue that it is basically astronomy, or the intellectual study of the movements of the cosmic god, that provides an answer to both 2. and 3.

1. It has been contended that Plato in the *Timaeus* reduces philosophy to a mere study of the "nature of the universe" (47a7, cf. 41e2),[21] with the implication that he

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[20] This question would be particularly provoking if one were to suppose that the *Timaeus* post-dates the *Parmenides*, where it is aporetically suggested that Ideas would only be knowable by god but not by us (134b-c).

[21] Cf. Kucharski (1966: 319, 326).

abandons the conception that the ultimate goal of the philosopher is the Ideas. On the one hand, it is true that the dialogue stresses the relation of the *nous* of god -rather than that of human beings- with the Ideas (cf. 29a, 37a-c), and thus we see god performing the functions of a dialectician at 39e, where he distinguishes the different species comprised in the Idea of Living Being (*ho esti zôion*). However, at *Tim.* 51e Plato asserts that "of *doxa alêthês* one must say that all men partake, whereas of *nous* only gods and a small class of men", *nous* being in this context the cognitive correlate of the Ideas whose existence the whole passage in question (51b7-52a4, cf. esp. 51d3-5) tries to settle. So we can see that, even though it is now god preeminently who is put in relation to the Ideas, Plato still allows that possibility for a small minority of human beings, who would naturally be the philosophers.

2. Now, as 51e seems to suggest, knowledge of the Ideas is hard to achieve for man. And so we find, in the *Timaeus*, an attempt by Plato to bridge the gap between human beings and the Ideas (which is in a sense an example of the more general gap between Ideas and sensibles). The key concept, in this respect, is the World-Soul: We have seen that from a metaphysical perspective, and because of its ontological constitution, it serves to mediate between the indivisible and the divisible, *i.e.* Ideas and sensibles (cf. 35a1-b1). This World-Soul (or the universe that it animates), as we also know, is a god; itself has a mathematical structure (35b ff.) and rules over the motions of the divine stars and planets, which, from an ethical perspective, human beings are encouraged to learn. This learning of astronomy involves mainly the exercise of intellectual functions[22]

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[22] Vision is, of course, in the *Timaeus* a necessary condition of astronomical research, for without it no inquiry into the heavens is possible (47a). But it is made clear that we must participate in the reasonings or calculations (*logismoi*) of the universe (47c), and this is done by *thinking* which is assimilated to the object of thought (cf. *tôi katanooumenôi to katanooun exomoiôsai,* 90d4). Cf. also 91d6-

and is based on the apprehension of mathematical relationships[23] (such as those governing the relative distances between the heavenly bodies, cf. 35b ff., 36d2-3).[24] And this knowledge of astronomy will constitute in the *Timaeus* again, as in the *Republic,* the possibility of an intermediate step towards the knowledge of Ideas.

So, at 47a4-b2, we read that the observation of days, months and years has given us the notion of number and time, and the possibility of researching the nature of the universe, from which (*ex hôn*) we have derived philosophy, the greatest good that has been gifted to mortals by the gods.

At 90b-c, in its turn, we are told that, whoever has devoted himself to love of knowledge and true thoughts, must think things immortal and divine (*phronein athanata kai theia*) -if he be in contact with truth-, participate in immortality (as far as is possible for human nature) and be happy. What are those *athanata kai theia* that one must think? We know that '*athanata kai theia*' is an expression that Plato uses in previous dialogues for the

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e1 for the implication that it is wrong to suppose that the firmest proof about the heavens is obtained through the sense of sight. On the subject see e.g. Vlastos (1980: 6-8).

[23] It is quite telling, in this respect, that the text speaks of apprehending the *harmonies* and revolutions of the All (*tas tou pantos harmonias te kai periphoras,* 90d3-4), taking into account that the World-Soul itself is said to participate in *logismos* and *harmonia* (36e6-37a1), being composed of mathematical intervals (35b-36a).

[24] At *Tim.* 36d2-3 we read that "the inner circle [of the Other] was divided six times into seven unequal circles, according to each interval of the double and triple [proportions]", in a way that remits to the double and triple intervals into which the World Soul is divided at 35b-c, on the basis of the numbers 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 27 which form two geometrical (square and cubic) progressions. In the light of this, *Tim.* 36d2-3 would then suggest that the distances between the planetary orbits correspond to the six intervals between the seven terms of the series, 1, 2, 3, 4, 8, 9, 27; though the way that happens, as Cornford (1937: 79) has remarked, is subject to different interpretations. The simplest view seems to be that these figures measure the radii of successive orbits, so that the radius of the Moon's orbit equals one, that of the the Sun's 2, and so on up to Saturn whose radius or distance from the Earth would equal 27. In this line of interpretation see e.g. Brisson (1974: 40-1). For different interpretations in antiquity see Heath (1913: 164).

Ideas (*Phaedo* 80b1, 81a5 -cf. 79d-80a-, *Rep.* X 611e2-3); and *alêtheias ephaptêtai* in 90c1-2 immediately recalls *tou alêthous ephaptomenôi* in *Symp.* 212a5, where the allusion is to an Idea. But *athanata kai theia* could also here include -as well as the Ideas- the "harmonies and revolutions of the All" which, some lines immediately below (90c-d), we are recommended to learn and intellect, thus "assimilating that which thinks to the object of thought" (90d3-4) and so taking care of the *daimôn* that is within us by furnishing it with its proper motions. Let us remember, in this respect, that the heavenly bodies have been called *theia kai aidia* at 40b5, and the universe a god as we have seen. The openness of the passage is suggestive, since, by allowing that the human mind can have access to the divine either in the form of the cosmic god, or the Ideas, Plato would be allowing that human beings can be happy in either way, and therefore without necessarily being philosophers, but just by studying astronomy.[25]

But *why* does astronomy contribute to human happiness? Whereas in the *Republic* the ethical consequences of the study of astronomy were not particularly highlighted,[26] they are in the *Timaeus*: We should learn astronomy, or the unperturbed revolutions of intellect in heaven, in order to correct the wandering revolutions of our thought (47b-c, cf. 39b4-c1), which underwent perturbations at

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[25] If, as I have argued in the previous chapter, intellect in heaven belongs to the order of the primary or "divine" causes, then it becomes clear why, at 68e7-69a2, it is recommended that we should search for the divine kind of cause in all things so as to acquire a happy life insofar as our nature permits.

[26] It is certainly clear that the function of astronomy, as much as that of all the propaedeutic sciences, is to be conducive to *ousia* and the Good in the *Republic* (see e.g. VII 523a, 527b, d-e, 532c); though not much is explicitly said about the ethical immediate advantages that such a study could convey independently of its function as a prelude to dialectic. For an attempt to draw out the ethical implications of mathematics in the *Republic* cf. Burnyeat (1987: 238-40, esp. 240), though here again the emphasis is only put on the training of the politician, and not people in general as I shall be claiming for the *Timaeus*.

our birth (43a-e).[27] Only if they are working properly can those revolutions rule (44a-b). And Plato, as we have seen, also in the *Timaeus* makes happiness lie in a life based in the rule of reason (cf. e.g. 90c5-6, where the meaning of the word *eudaimôn* is derived analytically from having one's *daimôn* -*i.e.* one's reason- in good order).

Now, we can see that the astronomical universe will provide a proximate model for human behaviour; something that has two kinds of consequences, non-immediate, for the philosopher, and immediate, for every kind of person.

Astronomy will serve a most important function towards knowledge of the Ideas by the philosopher since studying astronomy makes our rational soul orderly (*i.e.* helps it regain its own mathematical proportion -43d-44c-[28] in accordance with that of the universe). And only if the revolutions of our reason are working properly can we have access to truth at all (44a-b), be it concerned with sensibles or, particularly for our purposes, with Ideas as the object of *epistêmê* and *nous* (37b3-c3). That is why, at 90b-d, the only way we could know the Ideas would be through learning the harmonies and revolutions of the whole celestial system. If this is so, astronomy would in the *Timaeus* be an indispensable step towards philosophy proper.[29] The propaedeutic character of astronomy was certainly indicated in the *Republic* (VII, 528e ff.), but now it presents by itself also a religious function. We should thus "assimilate that which thinks to the object of thought" (90d4), and having assimilated it (*homoiôsanta*, d5), achieve the end of the best life that

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[27] These perturbations prevail in the infant soul but can also continue in adult life, thus being the cause of diseases and evil for the soul, though "one must strive, as far as one can, through nurture and one's practices and studies to escape evil and choose (*helein*) the contrary" (87b6-8).

[28] Cf. esp. 44b8-c2 and *infra*, n. 35.

[29] As noted by Brisson (1992a: 62, 246-7 n. 321 and 325) and suggested by Sedley (1991: 376-7). In this chapter I try to explain in more detail how that can be possible.

the gods put before men. This *homoiôsis* is conceived mainly in terms of communion with god,[30] specifically here with the god of the universe (cf. *tou pantos* 90c8, d3).[31] And in this way god would have a mediating role in enabling man to participate in the Ideas. Its mediation would be both epistemological (since only by knowing god in its mathematical proportion -and thus becoming orderly- can our reason know the Ideas), religious (since only participation in this god allows for a further participation in the highest level of the divine) and ethical (as a step towards the happy philosophical life). The macrocosm, in its constant regularity, would provide us with the pattern which we should follow in the first instance in order to become truly just and wise. In this regard, it is noteworthy that, whereas the middle dialogues tended to stress the relation of affinity and similarity between the human being and the Ideas (cf. e.g. *Phaedo* 79d3, e1, 84b2, *Rep*. VI 487a5, 490b4, X 611e2 for *sungeneia*, *Phaedo* 79b16, e1, 80b3, *Rep*. VI 500c5 for *homoiôsis*), the *Timaeus* stresses the affinity or similarity between the human being and god.[32] Microcosmic reason has been made in the *Timaeus* to have the same kind of motion and share the same nature as the macrocosmic one -and to proceed from the same mythical source- (41d) and this entitles the former to be called *"athanatois homônumon"* (41c6). It is then by virtue of this kindred nature (cf. *Tim*. 47b8, 90a5, c8 for *sungeneia*) that man can become similar to god (*homoiôsanta*, 90d5), participate in him (*metaschontes*, 47c2) or imitate him (*mimoumenoi*, 47c2) as the model of behaviour that human

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[30] Plato stresses similarity with god as an aim to be striven for by humans in several dialogues. Cf. *Theaet*. 176b1-2: *homoiôsis theôi kata to dunaton*; also *Rep*. X 613b1, *Phaedrus* 253b-c and *Laws* IV 716c-d.

[31] Cf. Festugière (1949: 138-9), followed by López (1963: 196). For the foreshadowing of Hellenistic conceptions of man as citizen of the universe see Solmsen (1983: 365). I don't see any basis for claiming that this resemblance with god is a process that cannot be achieved during our earthly existence -as Lovibond (1991: 55) seems to suggest; the text at 90d5-7 rather speaks of "the best life put before men by the gods *both for the present and for the future time*".

[32] Cf. Des Places (1964: 88); Kucharski (1966: 327).

reason should follow (47c-d, 90d). But, in turn, the Ideas are the model that is imitated by god, not only in his demiurgic presentation (29a, 37c-d, 39e), but also by the universe and the heavenly bodies, whose motions constitute time (39d1) and which would, like time, imitate as far as possible, through their regularity, the ummovable paradigm of eternity (37c-38b; 39d7-e2).[33]

In this way, the human ascent towards the Ideas would involve several intermediary levels: Whereas human reason is a *daimôn* that connects terrestrial man with the celestial gods (cf. 90a), god in turn would be a link between human reason and the Ideas in a first level of paradeigmatism, which would facilitate the ascent towards the second level.[34] But it is also possible that other human beings than philosophers (namely the majority) could take the celestial god as their only model, without further ascent.

3. In that respect, the study of astronomy provides also immediate results, since an orderly intellect serves to make us act rightly. Hence we find the *Timaeus* promising that if a man uses the rational part of his soul to rule over his passions (something to which the appropriate *paideia* contributes, 44b8-c2,[35] cf. 86e1-2, 87b) he will be just and happy and free from reincarnation (42b), though it predicts transformation into lower animals for those who haven't studied astronomy properly -either they just did it with their senses, or they didn't do it at all (91d-e). In this way, the study of astronomy, which is recommended as the same *therapeia* for everybody (*panti*

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[33] See *menei* and *kata tauta* used of the stars at 40b5-6 (cf. 40a8-b1) and *menontos* used of the eternity of the Ideas at 37d6 and *kata tauta* of the Ideas at 38a3, 52a1.

[34] This mediating function can also be seen in the *Phaedrus*, where it is the traditional gods (though with a special emphasis on their noetic aspect, 247c-d) who lead the procession of souls to contemplate the Ideas (cf. 247a, 248a, 250b). On this see Ferrari (1987: 127-32).

[35] Cornford (1937: *ad loc.*) identifies this *paideia* as astronomy, in the light of 47c.

mia, 90c6; cf. *hekaston dei* at 90d1),[36] would seem to secure a way of happiness for any individual. If this is so, in contrast e.g. with the *Phaedo* where happiness -and liberation- strictly speaking only belonged to the philosopher (cf. 80e-81a),[37] Plato's views in the *Timaeus* would come closer to those expressed in other later dialogues, such as the *Philebus* and the *Laws*. In the *Philebus,* in fact, Plato is concerned about a mixed life of knowledge and pleasure that would make every rational being happy (cf. *anthrôpois pasi,* 11d5). The *epistêmê* at

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[36] Speaking in general terms about the care and health of every *zôion,* the *Timaeus* states that in order to avoid disproportion between body and soul the only solution is neither to move (*kinein*) soul without body, nor body without soul -87d, 88b- (and then, e.g., practice gymnastics together with mathematics, 88c); but we know in the light of 90c-d that, as far as our rational soul is concerned, the motion recommended to it is the learning of the kindred motions of the universe.

[37] Certainly, the *Republic* can be seen already as an attempt to extend happiness to the whole of society, given its emphasis that the state founded there pursues the happiness not only of the guardians but also of the rest of the *polis* (IV 420b, 466a). But this happiness seems in the end parasitic on the ideal conditions established by the rule of a philosopher. So, at I 354a the *just* man is said to be happy, and at VII 521a the happy man must have the wealth of a *wise* and virtuous life. But at IV 443c-d we learn that justice in the soul lies in each part of the soul doing its own, thus bringing about self-rule and internal order: a just action will be that which helps to preserve this condition of the soul, and wisdom (*sophia*) the science which supervises (*epistatousan epistêmên*) that action (443e). But, strictly speaking, wisdom based in *epistêmê* does not seem to lie within every ordinary individual, but just in the philosopher. For it is only thanks to the smallest group, which rules, that a *polis* can be said to be "wise as a whole"; and it is the knowledge of the ruler which is the only true wisdom (IV 428e-429a). So, e.g., a soldier in the ideal city has right *opinion* about the things that he has been taught to fear (IV 429b-c), but it is only the philosopher who can justify -and impart- that right opinion in the light of his particular knowledge (cf. VII 520c). Without the latter no happiness seems in the end guaranteed for either the individual or the *polis* in the *Republic*; whereas the role of astronomy in the *Timaeus* seems to provide a means to happiness in principle independent of philosophy, or of any ideal rule that could be exercised by the philosopher. (For further discussion of this issue in the *Republic* cf. Vlastos [1969b: 136-9], Annas [1981: 136 ff., 306 ff.], Irwin [1995: 229 ff.].)
Of course certainly we still need in the *Timaeus* a good kind of education, but this could exist within a bad form of government as a way of counteracting it, cf. *Tim* 87b: we become evil when "the forms of government are bad and bad discourse is made in the cities privately and publicly, and *when, furthermore* (*eti*), *no lessons* (*mathêmata*) *that could be curative of those* [i.e. those bad forms of government and discourse] *are learned from a young age*".

stake here includes not only the precise knowledge of the Ideas -a sense however that it keeps (as the "truer", 61d10-e4),[38] together with *nous* and *phronêsis* (58d6-7, 59d1)- but is given -together with the others-[39] a strikingly wide sense (cf. 59b7, 61d10-e3) that, by including right opinions (cf. 58e-59b, esp. 59a1 with 59b7), allows everybody to participate in it. In like manner we can find some uses in the *Timaeus* of the term *philosophia*, in a wide sense that applies to fields other than the Ideas (cf. e.g. 88b-c, where *pasês philosophias* and *mathematics* are advised to be exercised as a counterpart to gymnastics in order for anyone to deserve being called *kalos kai agathos*).

The *Laws* (VII 809c-d, 817e-818c), for its part, and unlike the *Republic*,[40] makes more explicit the need for *every citizen* to study astronomy (and mathematics in general),[41] and distinguishes two kinds: a less accurate kind (to be learnt by the majority)[42] and a more accurate

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[38] In like manner dialectic will also keep its privileged position of access to the Ideas. Cf. *Phil.* 57e6 ff., 58d4 ff.

[39] For this wide sense as regards *nous* see 59b7; and as regards *phronêsis* see 19b (which speaks of kinds of *phronêsis* that need to be divided, like *epistêmai* at 13e-14a), and 61d (where the question is posed whether all kinds of pleasure or all kinds of *phronêsis* should be included in the mixture, and the text immediately passes on to distinguish different kinds of *epistêmê*, as if this and *phronêsis* were synonyms).

[40] Let us remember that in the *Republic* mathematical studies appear as indispensable only in the *curriculum* of those who are candidates to be guardians of the state (VII 521c ff.).

[41] The importance of astronomy, and mathematics in general, is highlighted in several respects: (i) mathematics quickens the mind (cf. *Rep.* VII 526b) and improves one's own nature (*para tên hautou phusin epididonta*, V, 747b5-6); (ii) a basic but sufficient knowledge of astronomy facilitates comprehension of the workings of the calendar as far as it is necessary for the administration of the city (VII 809c-d); (iii) it helps prevent impiety and blasphemous statements about the heavenly bodies (821c-e); (iv) it is a necessary condition for man's becoming "divine" (*theios genesthai*), *i.e.* for his attaining his best state (818c). Cf. Dicks (1970: 137-8).

[42] After stating that every free man should learn arithmetic, *metrêtikê* and astronomy (VII 817e), Plato recognizes explicitly that it is not necessary that *hoi polloi* should do that *di'akribeias*, for that "is not easy nor at all possible for everybody" (818a). In other words, Plato is still aware of the limitations of the majority of people (as much as he was in the *Republic* when stating that "it is

one (this would be compulsory only for the guardians of the state, cf. XII 965a-b, 966c ff., esp. 967d4-968a4).[43] The *Timaeus* does not distinguish between these two kinds of astronomy, but it at least highlights its importance for general education in a way that anticipates the more detailed treatment of the *Laws*.[44]

III. CONCLUSION

In sum, we can find in the *Timaeus* a Plato who, on the one hand, retains the belief of the middle dialogues that the Ideas are the ultimate goal of the philosopher,[45] though, on the other hand, he is now more worried, firstly, about bridging the gap between us and the Ideas and, secondly, about finding some guarantee of right behaviour and therefore happiness for every kind of person. In both respects the study of astronomy, that is, the intellection of the cosmic god or gods, proves to serve a most important ethical function. God can either be the only model of human behaviour, or a step towards higher goals. And in the latter sense we have seen how god turns out to be a mediator not only at a metaphysical

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impossible that the crowd be philosophic" VI 494a4), though now positively willing to maximize their capacities.

[43] This difference is one between more basic or simpler pieces of knowledge and more complex or detailed ones, not between what is more or less true. For Plato says that even the less accurate kind comprises what is *anankaion* in mathematical studies, a necessity that binds even the gods (818b) and must be known as the right basis for further study (cf. *tauta estin ha dei labonta orthôs prôta epi talla ionta toutôn hêgoumenôn tôn methêmatôn manthanein*, 818d6-8), even by the one who is going to take care of humans (818c2). Plato in addition complains in the subsequent lines that it is worse to learn something in the wrong way than to be absolutely inexperienced about these things (819a3-6).

[44] As far as I am aware, this particular aspect of the *Timaeus* hasn't received due attention from other scholars. Kung (1989), while noting the importance of mathematical studies for human virtue (309), doesn't however draw any distinction between the philosopher and ordinary people in this regard, nor does she point out any difference between the ethical treatment of astronomy in the *Republic* on the one hand, and the *Timaeus* and the *Laws* on the other, which she takes as exhibiting the same line of thought (cf. *ibidem*).

[45] Cf. e.g. *Phaedo* 66b ff., *Rep.* VI 504d-505b, VII 540a-b.

level, by connecting the sensible realm in general with the Ideas, but also at an ethical, epistemological and religious level for human beings. And, even though in the first sense god could partly appear mythically as a personal Demiurge, we have seen how that mediation is in the cosmos actually fulfilled by the World-Soul and the heavenly bodies, for whose status as gods the text supplies plentiful evidence. And *this* is, in the end, the kind of god that matters from an ethical perspective, the god that can be seen, learned and argued for.[46]

[46] For Plato's detailed argument for the existence of god, which, as Craig (1980: 15) has noted, goes no further than the World-Soul and the heavenly bodies, see *infra*, ch. 7 on *Laws* X.
On the other hand, it is interesting to note that no separate *nous* (such as one could think of the Demiurge to be) apart from the cosmic god plays any role in the cognitive ascent of the soul towards the Ideas, so that one could wonder, if one wanted to posit the Demiurge as a *nous* separate from that of the world, whether there would be any point in building a metaphysics which has no epistemological correlate for every level. (Note that in later Platonism, e.g. Plotinus -cf. *Enn.* V 1 10 with VI 9 3-4- the correlation between the metaphysical on the one hand, and the epistemological and the ethical on the other, is particularly emphasized.)

CHAPTER 4

PERAS, APEIRON AND CAUSE IN THE *PHILEBUS*

The passage of the *Philebus* (14-31) dealing with the problem of one and many and the notions of *peras* and *apeiron* has proved to be one of the most obscure and controversial in the history of Platonic interpretation. Do these notions apply to the Ideas? If so, what does it mean to say that Ideas can contain "infinitude" in them? Do they also apply to the sensible realities -and again, what does this mean in that case? Or are there no transcendent Ideas in the *Philebus*, so that Plato has changed his view from that which is taken to be typical of the middle dialogues?[1] Or, perhaps, should we change our approach based only on the dialogues and look to Aristotle's report on "Plato's unwritten doctrines" to find a clue to the interpretation of the *Philebus*?[2] And what is the purpose of this passage in a dialogue which is mostly devoted to elucidating the nature of pleasure and its place in a happy life? These are some of the questions that the pages under discussion provoke.

Some recent attention has been paid to the *Philebus* though little, to my knowledge, has been written on the cosmological aspects of the dialogue. In this chapter I shall be dealing mainly with the cosmological import of the notion of "cause" and its interaction with the related concepts of *peras, apeiron* and mixture in *Phil.*

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[1] As is suggested e.g. by Owen (1953: 321 n.3, 338), Teloh (1981: 179-80, 186, 188) and, from a different perspective, Sayre (1983: 10-3, 160-3). In an agnostic position, though sympathetic to revisionism, cf. Shiner (1974: esp. 67-8).

[2] For an extreme line that minimizes the importance of the written dialogues, cf. e.g. Kraemer (1982) and Gaiser (1963). Sayre, on the other hand, relies on Aristotle but contends that what he refers to as the unwritten doctrines can in fact be found in the dialogues (cf. 1983: 11-3); whereas Kolb (1983: 510) claims that the unwritten doctrines stand behind Plato's *Philebus* not as a necessary presupposition but as a helpful guide for the discussion of many of the problems there.

23c-31a. Therefore I shall not be concerned with the other problems except indirectly. I shall also be working on the assumption that Plato's text itself gives us sufficient material to allow a coherent interpretation to be made.[3] However, I shall start by setting out briefly what I consider to be the background to the cosmological discussion.

I. THE CONTEXT FOR THE COSMOLOGICAL DISCUSSION

The problem to be studied arises in the context of the ethical purpose of the dialogue, which is to decide how human beings can achieve a happy life and what is the good for them, be it intelligence, pleasure, or a life superior to both (cf. 11b-12a). Now, this problem involves, to start with, two separate discussions which deal with the notions of *peras* and *apeiron*. I shall try to show that the latter (23c-31a) is cosmological. As to the former (14c-19b), I take it, with many scholars,[4] to be dialectical, in the sense that it deals with -and is basically a reflection on- the process of division (*diairesis*, 15a7, cf. *dielôn* 14e1) of monads into further subkinds, the emphasis being put on the Ideas, or those monads which are beyond generation and corruption (14d ff., esp. 15a-b).[5] The point would be to show how each

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[3] For a full recent discussion of the problem of Plato's unwritten doctrines see *Méthexis* 6 (1993), which is devoted to the subject.

[4] Cf. Bury (1897: xxxv-xxxix); Taylor (1926: 412); Cornford (1935: 186); Robin (1938: 68-70); Hackforth (1945: 21); Cherniss (1945: 18), (1947: 234); Ross (1951: 131 ff.); R. Robinson (1953: 70, 162, 231-2); Friedlaender (1969: 319-21); Grube (1980: 44-5); Davidson (1990: 33 ff., 174-5); Hampton (1990: 23-8); D. Frede (1992: 427), (1993: xxix-xxx); De Chiara-Quenzer (1993: 41-2). For a different line, cf. e.g. Gosling (1975: 196 ff).

[5] It is the use of the appropriate method of dealing with the one and the many which distinguishes the dialectical from the eristic method of discussion at 17a (and so Waterfield [1980: 282] may be right that "the passage is best read, then, simply as a recommendation of scientific analysis in general, as Socrates' remark at 16c2-3 suggests", since the method is said to be applicable to all disciplines). However, at 57e-58a, dialectic is also characterized in terms of its object: the eternal, true and identical being (cf. d4-5). We can then still talk of Ideas in the *Philebus*, at least in the

generic monad contains a limited number of kinds mediating between it and the indefinite quantity (*apeira*) of sensibles in which it is ultimately "dispersed" (cf. 15b). Each initial monad, we can say, would then be limited in itself and in the number of kinds falling under it, as well as being paradoxically split up in the infinitude -as indefinite number- of sensibles that participate in it. The notions of *peras* and *apeiron* seem to have an application in this context which will contrast with their application[6] in the following passage (23c ff.).[7]

The shift from the former to the latter is however coherent.[8] The text comes back to the initial question about intellect and pleasure and which of them is preferable, and says it is important to determine how

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sense that here Plato still posits a realm of entities that is eternal, stable, divine, apprehensible by the highest form of cognition and irreducible to the realm of *genesis* (cf. 57e-58a, 59c-d, 61e-62a). It is with these non-generated entities that Plato is mainly concerned in this passage (cf. 15a-b), even though the method at stake here -division aiming at classification- can be applied more widely than to the Ideas. Cf. *infra,* note 14. For this twofold use of dialectic cf. D. Frede (1993: 71 n.1).

[6] Note that, while in the former passage *peras* and *apeiron* are instrumental notions governing the method of division, in the latter (23c ff.) they themselves become objects of division. Other differences will become clearer later, though there will still be a common denominator insofar as *peras* will be connected with number and *apeiron* with lack of definite quantity.

[7] The crucial text in the dialectical context as regards these notions is 16c9-10: "the things that are always said to exist consist of one and many and contain naturally the finite and the infinite" (*ex henos men kai pollôn ontôn tôn aei legomenôn einai, peras de kai apeirian en hautois sumphuton echontôn*). The expression *tôn aei legomenôn einai* can be taken to refer to the Ideas (cf. e.g. Striker [1970: 18-22]), or to reality in general including both sensibles and Ideas (cf. e.g. Waterfield [1980: 282], Benitez [1989: 41-2]), but in either case Ideas would appear to be included, since the context is those monads which escape generation and corruption (15a-b, cf. *Parm.* 128e-131c), and since the method at stake is meant to have a wide scope, for through it *all the arts* have been discovered (16c2-3), among which the art concerned specifically with the Ideas (57e-58a) should *a fortiori* be included. Cf. D. Frede (1993: xxix). *Pace* Gosling (1975: 84).

[8] The shift is marked by the assertion, at 23b-c, that "other weapons" are needed than those of the previous discussion, and that we should make a new beginning (*archê*).

many and of what sort (*hoposa kai hopoia*, 19b3) are the kinds of pleasure and wisdom. In this respect the divisional search proves to be vital and will be extremely useful in the second part of the dialogue (31b ff.), which precisely sets out to divide pleasure and *epistêmê* in order to establish which kinds of each of them ought to play a part in a happy and good human life. But we can also see, Socrates says, that neither a life of mere pleasure nor a life of mere knowledge would be self-sufficient (*hikanon*, 20d4, cf. *autarkeia* 67a7) and therefore the truly good life, desirable and complete for everyone. For nobody would like, for example, to feel pleasure without remembering it or being conscious of it; nor would one like to have wisdom without feeling pleasure in it (20e-21e). In this way *a mixture* of *hêdonê* and *nous* seems to be a better way of living than each taken separately. Though, Socrates contends, even in this case *nous* seems to be more akin than pleasure to that by taking which the mixed life becomes both choiceworthy and good (22d). It is precisely in order to clarify this point that Socrates introduces a fourfold classification of everything in the cosmos into *peras*, *apeiron*, the mixture of these and the cause. As we shall see, the purpose of this division is to show that the good life corresponds to the kind of the mixture, pleasure to the class of *apeiron* and intellect to the class of the cause.

Against this background, I shall be focusing on the cosmological passage at *Phil*. 23c-31a and its fourfold classification. The aim of this chapter will be to show that the passage under discussion is in fact cosmological, *i.e.* concerned with the sensible universe as a whole -including both its body and soul- or with entities within it. In that context, I propose to analyse the four genera of the *Philebus* and the place and role of *nous* within the classification. The analysis will in turn be illuminated by a comparison with the *Timaeus*.

I shall be arguing that the *Philebus* provides a cosmological account which -despite the differences between these dialogues- shows connections with the one in the *Timaeus* and is particularly rich in emphasizing the causal role of *nous* as a principle of the existence and teleological arrangement of the cosmos by virtue of the imposition of *peras* upon *apeiron*; a principle, however, that should be taken as inherent in the universe it sustains, which, again, stands by itself as a model for human beings to follow in their pursuit of the good.

II. THE REALM CLASSIFIED

In *Phil.* 23c4-5 Socrates suggests dividing "all the things that now exist in the whole" (*panta ta nun onta en tôi panti*) "into two, or rather, if you wish, into three [classes]" (*i.e. apeiron, peras* and the mixture of the two), to which he will afterwards add a fourth: the cause.

Now, what kind of reality is Plato classifying in this passage? The question is controversial, perhaps because Plato has just been dealing with the notions of *peras* and *apeiron* in a dialectical context. This could then make us believe that the scope of the fourfold distinction at 23c ff. includes not only sensible realities but also the realm of Ideas, as some interpreters have thought.[9] My purpose is not to deny that the notions of *peras* and *apeiron* can be predicated of the Ideas, since this seems to be allowed in the preceding discussion. However, I think in this passage those notions are used in a different manner and apply to different entities, in a way that makes it unlikely that Ideas are being considered here. I shall attempt to show how this is so

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[9] See, for example, Jackson (1882: 283 ff.), Rodier (1926: 87), and, from a different perspective, Sayre (1983: 161 ff.), who think of Ideas as a kind of mixed reality according to that classification. Cf. *infra,* note 14.

and hence follow the cosmological interpretation of the passage.[10]

In the first place, the *nun* in the expression *ta nun onta en tôi panti* would seem a rather awkward way of referring to the Ideas,[11] which are in fact called *onta aei* at *Phil.* 61e3. Moreover, there are several contextual reasons for taking the expression *ta nun onta en tôi panti* to apply only to the sensible universe, the main one being that, apart from the occurrence of *to pan* here -at 23c4-, all the other references to *to pan* in this passage which extends up to 31a appear to refer to the physical universe. Thus, we have the allusions to the *kosmos* at *Phil.* 28e4, and to *to pan* as a synonym of the *kosmos,* in the passage concerning the analogy between macro and microcosm at 29a-30a. (Cf. *to pan* contrasted with *par' hêmin* at 29b9-10, c1-2, c6, d2, 30a3-6 and the parallel use of *kosmos* contrasted with *par' hêmin* at 29e1-6.) When we are told, for example, about fire *en tôi panti* at 29b-c, or that the body of *to pan* has a soul, at 30a, it is obvious that the meaning of *to pan* here cannot be other than the sensible universe. The governance of *nous* is said to be exerted on *to pan* at 30d8 (*aei tou pantos nous archei*), or on heaven and earth at 28c7-8 (*nous esti basileus hêmin ouranou kai gês*), so that *to pan* in the first case must again refer to the sensible universe as in the second case (as must *to holon* at 28d5-6, in the context of discussing if *nous* governs "the totality of things and this which is called the whole", *ta sumpanta kai tode to kaloumenon holon*). In addition, when Plato recapitulates the discussion of the four genera at 30a-c, he considers them in the context of "the whole universe"

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[10] The cosmological interpretation is also held e.g. by Taylor (1926: 417); Hackforth (1945: 37); Ross (1951: 136-8).

[11] Cf. Waterfield (1980: 303 n. 61). *Pace* Striker (1970: 72), Moravcsik (1979: 94), Benitez (1989: 68), Hampton (1990: 40). See also the *Timaeus* (38a), where Plato establishes a distinction between time and eternity and speaks of the word "now" (*nun*, a5) as a determination that applies exclusively to the temporal realm of becoming and is alien to the eternity of the Ideas. Cf. Tarán (1979: 43-5).

(*ouranos*, b5), it being evident that *ouranos* here has the same meaning as *to pan* at 30c4 and 23c4.[12]

For these reasons it seems so far that the passage under discussion is cosmological. This interpretation will be strengthened if we analyse the instances of the four classes.[13] To this I shall now turn. I shall characterize the four kinds as they are presented in the text, trying to deal with some of the problems that arise, especially as regards the status of the cause. Then I shall proceed to a comparison with the cosmology of the *Timaeus*.

III. THE FOURFOLD CLASSIFICATION

As we saw, the four classes[14] into which the Whole is divided are the following:

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[12] For a similar cosmological use of these terms in other dialogues cf. e.g., for *holon*, *Tim.* 33a7, *Laws* X 903b5, etc.; for *ouranos*, *Tim.* 28b2, 34b5, 37e2, 38b6, 52d4, *Pol.* 269d7, *Laws* X 896e1, 899b8; for *to pan*, *Pol.* 269c4, 270b7, 272e3-4, *Tim.* 28c4, 29d7, 30b5, 37d2, 44d3, 47a7, 48a5, 69c1, 88d6, 92c4, *Laws* X 903b-c; for *kosmos*, *Tim.* 28b3, 29a2, b2, 30b7, 31b2, 32c6, 42e9, 92c6, *Pol.* 269d8, e8, 272e5, 273b6, e6, 274d6, *Laws* VII 821a2.

[13] We shall see, for example, that Plato treats or alludes to the mixture and its components as *gignomena*, something that he would however deny of the Ideas.

[14] Again, the question might arise whether these four kinds themselves are Ideas, as for example Diès (1941: XCII-XCIV), Striker (1970: 49-50, 77-81) and D. Frede (1993: xxxviii, xxxix) have interpreted. This might be suggested not only because of the use of the words *eidos* or *genos* (cf. e.g. 23c-d) but also because there is classification of a unity into different species involving collection and division (cf. *sunagein* at 23e5 and 25a3, where Socrates speaks of collecting the varieties of unlimited together in order to discern their common nature; for allusions to the process of division, see e.g. 23d). As to the latter point, Trevaskis has however shown that not every kind of division needs to be concerned with Ideas (1967: 124-8). As to the former, it seems quite clear that the terms *to eidos* and *to genos* need not have the metaphysical meaning of "Idea", but can simply have the logical sense of "class" or "kind" into which something can be divided. With an analogous meaning Plato speaks e.g. in the *Timaeus* of model, copy and the receptacle as three *eidê* or *genê* of things (cf. *Tim.* 48e-49a, 50c7-d2, 52a) and in the *Phaedo* (79a6-7) of the visible and the invisible as *duo eidê tôn ontôn*.

1. *To apeiron*. We are told that a distinctive mark (*sêmeion*, 24e5, cf. 26c9-d2) of the nature of *to apeiron* is to admit of more or less (*tês to mallon te kai hêtton dechomenês phuseôs*, 25c10-11, cf. 24e7-8: *apeira* are things that become -*gignomena*- more and less). It includes contraries such as hot-cold, violent-gentle, quick-slow, dry-wet, great-small, acute-grave, pleasure-pain, etc. (cf. 24e-25a, 25c-d, 26a, 27e), since we can conceive (cf. *noêsais* 24a8) indefinitely of "colder" or "hotter" and so on. Things under this genus have therefore the property of not having beginning, middle or end (31a) -they are *atelê* (24b8)-, *i.e.*, they lack a precise quantity -*poson*- (cf. 24c-d). We also read that *apeira* such as hot and cold "are always progressing and never at rest" (*prochôrei kai ou menei...aei* 24d4), which suggests also lack of fixity and discrete quantity. We could then say that *apeiron* is related to a *continuum* which extends indefinitely in either direction (e.g. temperature), and each opposite in a given pair refers to a direction in the continuum (e.g. hot-cold).[15] In that respect, we can take *apeiron* in this context to mean quantitative indeterminacy -or indeterminacy in degree-, which is to be found on a scale of opposite qualities.[16]

2. *To peras*. This genus is strongly related to quantity (*poson*) and measure (*metrion*) -as implied by their

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[15] Cf. Benitez (1989: 71-2).

[16] The difference in application of *to apeiron* in this context from its occurrence in the dialectical context becomes clearer now. *Apeiron* in a dialectical context applies to a discrete series of sensibles, the number of which is indeterminate; whereas here *apeiron* means whatever admits of more and less on a continuum. Each of the infinite possible degrees in a continuum can, in addition, have an indefinite number of discrete instances. Neither of these features implies the other. For example, there could be only three hot things in the universe and still temperature would be *apeiron* as a continuum. Conversely, there could be an indefinite number of oxen in the universe without the property of being an ox admitting an infinite number of degrees. This does not preclude that one thing can be *apeiron* in both senses, for example pleasure -which is *apeiron kai plêthei kai tôi mallon*, 27e- and sound -cf. 17b ff., 26a.

absence from *to apeiron* at 24c-d-, and includes all those "things which do not admit these things [*sc.* more or less] but everything that admits the opposites of these things: first the equal and equality, and after the equal the double, and *everything that is number in relation to number or measure in relation to measure" (pan hotiper an pros arithmon arithmos ê metron êi pros metron,* 25a6-b2).[17] (For example, we might say, equality is the relation 1:1; the double is the relation 2:1, etc.) More generally, *peras* is "whatever stops opposites being different from one another, and by introducing number, makes them proportionate and harmonious" (*hoposê pauei pros allêla tanantia diaphorôs echonta, summetra de kai sumphôna entheisa arithmon apergazetai,* 25d11-e2). Limit is that with which measure is imposed (26d9). Law and order (*nomon kai taxin*) would then be examples of *peras echonta* (26b).[18] We are told that, in contrast with *apeiron,* "quantity" -conveyed by *peras*- "stands still and has stopped advancing" (*to poson estê kai proion epausato*) (24d5).

As we can see, *peras* is strongly connected with the mathematical proportion which is introduced in the continuum characterized by the *apeiron,* and which provides stability in contrast with the unceasing motion or progression of *apeiron*. Thus, for instance, when proportion is introduced in the pair "hotter-colder" a stable temperature results; when introduced in the pair "higher-lower" it produces e.g. the interval of a fifth, etc. This leads us directly to consideration of the third genus, since when *peras* is imposed upon *to apeiron* the mixture is produced.

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[17] Compare the connection between the excess (*lian,* 26a7) conveyed by *to apeiron* and the measure (*to metrion*) that removes the excess in the *Philebus,* with the importance of *to metrion* as that which guarantees beauty and goodness (in this case, in the products of *technê*) in the *Politicus,* by contrast with excess and deficiency in relation to one another (283c-284e, esp. 284a-b).

[18] The second group opposed to *apeiron* is called *peras* (27b8) or *peras echonta* (24a2, 26b2) indifferently.

3. *The mixture*. Socrates calls the third kind "the mixture (*summeixis*) of these", "the offspring of these" or "what is common" (*koinon*) -23d7, 26d8, 30a10. He also alludes to this reality as *meiktê kai gegenêmenê ousia* (27b8-9) or "a generation that comes into being (*genesis eis ousian*) from the measures produced with limit" (26d8-9).[19]

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[19] As some scholars have suggested, the apparent paradox involved in the expression -for those who are familiar with the contrasts between *genesis* and *ousia* e.g. in *Rep.* VII 534a and *Tim.* 29c3-, can however be resolved if we note that *ousia* in Plato does not always allude necessarily to the Ideas, but it can have the looser or wider sense of "reality" or "existence", being therefore applicable to any kind of being. Thus in *Tim.* 35a Plato speaks both of the sensible and the intelligible *ousia*; in *Laws* X 895d-896a *ousia* is used when speaking of soul as an example of the reality that corresponds to any name or definition. Cf. also *Phaedo* 79a6: *duo eidê tôn ontôn*. In this respect, the expression *genesis eis ousian* at *Phil.* 26d8 could be interpreted as meaning that what is generated comes into existence, and *gegenêmenê ousia* as meaning that the mixture is a kind of generated reality. Therefore in these passages *genesis* need not be opposed to *ousia* but may be related to it as *gignesthai* may be related to *einai*, despite the fact that, in the other contexts mentioned, Plato contrasts *genesis* with *ousia*. Cf. Diès (1941: XXVIII-XXIX); Hackforth (1945: 49, n. 2); Cherniss (1957: 353); Bolton (1975: 87-9). This however cannot be taken to imply that Plato has abandoned in the *Philebus* any contrast or metaphysical distinction between Ideas as real being and becoming. On the contrary, the distinction is made explicit in *Phil.* 14c-15a and, despite the *aporiai* posed at 15b, it is emphatically restated at the end of the *Philebus*, 58e-59a, 61d-e. Cf. Cherniss (1957: 350 ff.), Waterfield (1980: 284-5), Benitez (1989: 102-8). *Contra* Owen (1953: 322-4). The contrast between *genesis* and *ousia* is kept also at 53c-54d, though the context doesn't here seem to be metaphysically loaded (cf. Waterfield [1980: 287]).
Nonetheless, I would suggest that, without abandoning that distinction, Plato is, at least in the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus*, ready to bridge the gap between those opposing levels of reality at a cosmic level, by positing some intermediate reality which partakes of both. In the *Timaeus* this will be the World-Soul (or the cosmos *qua* having a Soul), which has an intermediate *ousia* between that of the Ideas and sensibles (35a); and *genesis* is used to describe both the chaotic becoming out of which the universe is made (cf. 52d3-4) and the sensible and orderly ensouled universe itself (e.g. *genesis kai to pan tode* at 29d7-e1 and *genesis kai kosmos* 29e4). The former, insofar as it lacks any stability, is in fact directly opposed to changeless *ousia*; and the contrast would still stand for the present cosmos, at least insofar as the latter is always changing in some way or other. However, Plato also makes it clear that the actual sensible universe also shares in some stability which is intelligently imposed (such as, in the *Timaeus*, that of the ratios which structure the World-Soul and the World-Body, cf. 31b-32c, 35b ff.). Cf. note 54. In

There are many examples of this third kind. Health exists by virtue of the right combination (*orthê koinônia*) of *peras* and *apeiron* (cf. 25e7-8); music is created when limit is added to the high and the low, the quick and the slow, which are unlimited (26a2-4); the seasons arise when measure and proportion are brought about out of the illimitation of cold and warm (26a-b). And, naturally, we have the example of the good life as a mixed life of pleasure (which in itself is unlimited) and order (cf. 26b). But all these examples and many others (such as beauty, physical strength, etc., 26b5-6) represent particular cases within the more general framework of the *ouranos* or *to pan* (cf. 30a9-c7), which also and primarily exists by virtue of a right mixture of *apeiron* and *peras*. Indeed, the World-Body is said to be ensouled (*empsuchon*, 30a6), and all ensouled things (cf. *to empsuchon eidos*), Plato says at 32a9-b1, arise as a result of *apeiron* and *peras*. In other words, *apeiron* and

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the same fashion we can follow Gadamer's interesting interpretation of *genesis eis ousian* at *Phil*. 26d8, as I shall be doing at the end of section 5.3. For another view that endorses the "respectable view of becoming" in Plato's late dialogues -including *Philebus* and *Timaeus*-, though still within the coordinates of the *genesis-ousia* contrast, cf. Bolton (1975: 84-5). Note also that, at *Phil*. 43a, the theory that *"hapanta anô te kai katô rhei"* is attributed by Socrates *to Protarchus* (who initially appeared as a supporter of hedonism), as if hedonism were committed to an ontological theory of flux; an argument, however, from which Socrates wants to escape (43a8), and which he concedes only for the sake of argument, to show how even on that premiss they must come back to his original suggestion (42d-e, which the theory of flux seemed to threaten) that there is such a state as having absence of pain and joy in the body (43c-e). *Pace* Mohr (1983: 169); the hypothetical rather than assertive character of the argument is noted by Shiner (1983: 177).

At *Philebus* 59a-b Plato complains of those who, even if they think they investigate nature, spend their lives investigating how things in this world *gegonen kai paschei kai poiei*; though these things lack *bebaiotêta*. As Teloh (1981: 185-6) remarks "the problem with bad craftsmen is not that they investigate those things concerning the *kosmos* (*ta peri ton kosmon*), but rather they seek only the mutable aspects of such things"; cf. D. Frede (1993: lxiii): the problem is not in the object but in the way we look at it. Certainly, it is 59b-d which gives the clue, by attributing *bebaiotêta* to *nous*: If the cosmos itself has intellect -as has been argued at 28c-30d- then it should at least to that extent have stability.

peras are properly combined both in the cosmos as a whole and in each of the things within it.[20] [21]

However, we could still wonder what is the cause of that right imposition of *peras* upon *apeiron* that makes a fine mixture. Let us examine the fourth kind.

4. *The cause*. The postulation of this kind is implied by the generation of the mixture, since "it is necessary that all things that come into being should do so through some cause" (*Phil.* 26e3-4, cf. *Tim.* 28a4-5, 28c2-3, *Phaedrus* 245d1-2). This *aitia* is called *to poioun* and *to dêmiourgoun* (26e6-8, 27a5, b1-2) and *sophia, phronêsis* and *nous* are included in this class (28a-d, 30c). Its functions are, in the first place, to produce (cf. 26e-27b) and, secondly, to rule (*hêgeisthai*, 27a5) the mixture: so this *nous* is said to govern (*diakubernan*, 28d9) and order (*suntattein*, 28d9, 30c5; *kosmein*, 30c5; *diakosmein*, 28e3) the mixture or "the totality of things and this which is called the whole" (28d5-6).

What kind of *nous* is Plato speaking about? In principle both the divine *Nous* that rules over the cosmos and the human individual *nous* seem to be at stake in the dialogue: the former is responsible for beauty and

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[20] Cf. Philolaos, B1 and B2 DK. The influence of the Philolaic concepts of *perainonta* and *apeira* on those of *peras* and *apeiron* in the *Philebus* seems to be well established, as much as the *triton genos* of the mixture in the *Philebus*, which includes harmony among its instances (31c), reminds us of *harmonia* as a third factor in addition to *perainonta* and *apeira* in Philolaos (B6 DK); cf. Burkert (1972: 64, 86 ff., 254 ff).

[21] By "things" here we do not need to think in terms of Aristotelian substances. Plato rather picks up as examples of the third *genos* items such as health, physical strength, etc. which seem to refer more to states or conditions than individual objects. But there is a good reason why he should prefer these examples, since after all the purpose of this cosmological background is to provide him with the weapons to reach the mixture of *nous* and pleasure in which happiness consists (and this particular case he might well have in mind at *Phil.* 26b); but happiness, we are told at 11d4, is to be understood in terms of a *hexis* and *diathesis* of the soul.

measure in the sensible universe (e.g. in the seasons and the revolution of the heaven, cf. 26a6-b3, 28e, 30c); the latter becomes prominent in human life as being ethically responsible for an adequately mixed way of living (cf. 22d, 27c-28a, 30e-31a). Nonetheless, it seems clear that Plato in this passage privileges the *Nous* which is king of the universe as a cause, and as a model for every other (individual) cause. This *Nous* is presented in an overt parallelism with microcosm: As we acknowledge in each of us the existence of a body which is derived from the body of the universe, so too we must suppose that our souls are derived from a universal and superior Soul (cf. 29a-30b). And it is by residing in this -Cosmic- Soul that *Nous* always rules the universe (cf. 30c-d).

So far it seems pretty clear that the *Nous* Plato is presenting as a cause of the mixture of the universe is the intellect in the World-Soul and therefore the Cosmic *Nous*. In fact, Plato also seems to think of the *aitia* in terms of the World-Soul itself at 30a-b, when, after asserting that our body has received its soul from the World-Soul (a5-8), he passes on to say that *to tês aitias genos* gives to our bodies soul (a10-b2). This, then, suggests that the *aitia* which performs that function is the World-Soul. If this is so, we should not be surprised that Plato thinks here of the *aitia* either in terms of *nous* or in terms of *soul*. In point of fact, we have seen in chapter 2 that Plato tends to think of *nous* as possessed by soul (cf. *Tim.* 46d5-6 for *nous* as possessed by soul in general and *Phil.* 58d on *nous* as *tês psuchês hêmôn dunamis*); the same point is here stressed by the remark that *nous* cannot arise without soul (30c9-10, *sophia mên kai nous aneu psuchês ouk an pote genoisthên*), *i.e.* soul is implied in the existence of *nous*. Now, certainly *nous* and soul do not completely coincide in the case of human beings, who also have other -irrational- faculties of soul (cf. e.g. 35d). However, they do seem to coincide in the case of the universe, and that is why

Plato alternates between saying that the cause is *Nous* and implying that it is the Cosmic Soul. This identification seems to be reinforced by the fact that the function of arranging years, seasons and months, which in the *Philebus* corresponds to the cause (*nous*, 30c5-7), is in the *Timaeus* performed by the Circles of the World-Soul (39c).

Now, any clarity we may have reached in concluding that the cause is the Cosmic *Nous* or Soul seems obscured by some other statements, which could again be taken to suggest that there is a *nous* which is over and above the Cosmic *Nous* -a problem which, we have seen, appears also in the *Timaeus*.[22]

The most difficult passage in this respect is *Phil*. 30d1-3. There, after asserting that reason and mind could never arise without soul, the text says that "then in the nature of Zeus... a kingly soul and a kingly mind arise through the power of the cause" (*oukoun en men têi tou Dios ...phusei basilikên men psuchên, basilikon de noun engignesthai dia tên tês aitias dunamin*, 30d1-3). What does "Zeus" stand for in this passage?

(i) If "Zeus" is taken just at its face value, as a name for a traditional god which anyhow Plato conceives of as intelligent and ensouled, it could be argued that the passage simply means that, the World-Soul being the superior cause, even that divinity (Zeus) has derived its soul and *nous* from those of the universe, as we are said to do. (After all the same is true in the *Timaeus* of the celestial gods, which seem to derive their soul from that of the World -since they have not given rise to a new mixture-, something that could also be present in *Phil*.

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[22] In favour of the latter view of the cause in the *Philebus* see T.M.Robinson (1970: 144); Mohr (1985: 174). Against, see e.g. Teloh (1981: 187-8); Ostenfeld (1982: 238).

30b4-7).[23] However, in the light of the context it seems more appropriate to interpret that:

(ii) Zeus is here another name for the Universe, possessing the World Intellect which is "king (*basileus*) of heaven and earth", about which Plato has just been speaking (28c7-8) and will go on speaking by stressing that "*aei tou pantos nous archei*" (30d8). Thus, "Zeus" can be another name that Plato might be introducing -as a compromise with, or attempt at integrating, the tradition- for the ruling god of the universe.[24] If this is so, then the passage could be taken as implying that even this World-Soul (represented as Zeus') has been created by a superior cause.

This difficulty cannot however be solved by simply inferring that Plato is positing an intelligence which is soulless and superior to soul and *nous* in the *kosmos* - this could not be so when Plato has just stated the dependence of *Nous* on Soul.[25] And it could hardly be solved by inferring that there is one ensouled *nous* which is superior to and separate from the intelligence of the cosmos.[26] In either case, why did Plato establish the analogy between macro and microcosm, and consequently the existence of a Cosmic Soul -and *Nous*- in a context devoted precisely to enlightening the nature of the cause?[27] Any interpretation of the cause as separate from the world will also overlook the fact that Plato previously emphasized that the cause *exists in* (*enon*) all

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[23] For further discussion of this passage cf. *infra* n. 30.
[24] Cf. *Phaedrus* 246e for allusions to Zeus as *diakosmôn panta* (as we saw in Introd., section 2) and *Pol.* 272b with 273d-e (*infra*, ch. 5, section 2.7 and ch. 6, section 1.2) for Zeus with a similar function.
[25] This line however is followed by Hackforth (1936) and Mohr (1985: 178, n. 3).
[26] As e.g. T.M. Robinson (1970: 143-4) suggests.
[27] As Ostenfeld (1982: 237-8) suggests, the argument for a Cosmic Reason is established *via* an argument for the World-Soul; and the *logos* starting at 29a6 with the macro-microcosm analogy is at 30d said to support the assertions of ancient thinkers in defence of a ruling *Nous* introduced at 28c6 ff.

things (30b1) -an expression he had used for the four elements as *enonta* in the composition of the universe at 29a11- or *in* the universe (*en tôi panti*, 30c4), which therefore suggests the inherence of the cause rather than its ontological separation. (Cf. also the consideration of *nous*, or the cause, as an element *en tôi meiktôi biôi* at 22d.)

But then we are still in need of an interpretation of *Phil.* 30d1-3. One -metaphysical- answer that could perhaps be given is that, if we suppose that soul is a self-mover and principle of motion (a theory expressed in *Phaedrus* 245c ff. and *Laws* X 896a-b), then soul or *nous* arises by virtue of its own self-moving (and self-creative) power.[28] In the case of soul, self-motion would imply self-creation insofar as the very essence and definition of soul consists in self-motion, cf. *Laws* X 895e-896b. Thus, if the soul creates its own motion, it creates itself.

Another -logical- answer could rely on Plato's distinguishing four *kinds* in the universe, the cause thus being a *genos* in which both World-Soul and individual *nous* would be included (cf. *nous esti genous tês tou pantôn aitiou*, 30d10-e1). From a logical point of view, the cause as *genos* seems wider than the two latter cases. And so at *Phil.* 30d1-3 Plato could in this respect be saying that the scope of the cause (as genus) is such that through it there exists (in the sense that the genus encompasses) intellect in the universe -represented by Zeus-, as much as in other entities.[29] [30]

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[28] The *Philebus* doesn't explicitly contain this theory, though it says that every impulse (*hormê*) and principle (*archê*) of living creatures belongs to the soul (35d).

[29] Plato gives *to tês aitias genos* a similarly wide scope at 30a9-b3, since it includes both the World-Soul (as responsible for giving soul to us and to the heavenly bodies), and also human *nous* and *technê* (which would at least partly be responsible for our physical strength and health, through gymnastics and medicine respectively).

[30] Another awkward passage is *Phil.* 30a9-b7, which has been taken to mean that the cause has devised (*memêchanêsthai*) in the four elements the nature of the most beautiful and noble things (*tên tôn kallistôn*

Now, a most important point to be noticed about the cause here is that Plato sets it as a kingly *Nous* which rules over the universe, in contraposition with irrationality and chance (28d). The governance of this *Nous* is asserted by the observation of the beautiful arrangement of "sun, moon, stars and the whole revolution" of the universe (28e3-5). We are faced here with one of the first examples, in the history of philosophy, of the cosmological (or "physico-theological") proof which infers the existence of god from the orderly arrangement of the cosmos;[31] an argument that is complemented by the macro-microcosm analogy. Now since god, or the cause, operates with an intelligent design (cf. *memêchanêsthai,* 30b6), this contrast between *nous* and chance is also a contrast between *teleology* and fortuitousness. As we shall see, the *peras* imposed by *Nous* on the universe is tantamount to goodness, since the goodness of a mixture

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kai timiôtatôn phusin, b6-7), taking this nature to refer to the World-Soul, and suggesting therefore that the cause is over and above it. For this line cf. e.g. Hackforth (1936: 439); who translates b6-7 as "that which is fairest and most precious" (see also 1945: *ad loc.*). However, *tên tôn kallistôn kai timiôtatôn phusin* seems to refer not to the World-Soul, in the singular, but, literally, to "the nature of the most beautiful and noble things", which must be a reference to the heavenly bodies, those great parts of the universe mentioned at b5. If this is so, there is no difficulty in thinking that *Nous* -as the World-Soul, immanent to the universe- is the cause of the nature of the heavenly bodies (which in the *Timaeus* are ruled by and inserted in the Circles of the World-Soul).

[31] In the *Laws* (X 886a, d4-e1) Plato will find this kind of proof too difficult to sustain by mere appreciation of the *opsis* (*Phil.* 28e3) of the heaven, since contemporary materialistic theories could attempt to account for that in completely atheistic terms; so it is vital that he relies on astronomy as a science and more sophisticated arguments for his defence of design (see *infra* ch. 7 section 3.2; cf. *Laws* XII 967c2 ff. for the hint that the eyes can be insufficient in this regard). Here in the *Philebus* the proof advanced might seem comparatively naive, though note that it is put in Protarchus' mouth, and Socrates, even though encouraging him, still seems to feel the need of further justification by then advancing the argument based on the micro-macrocosm analogy which wants to conclude the existence of a World-Soul (29a-30a). See also the "perhaps" (*isôs*, 28c8) with which Socrates introduces the saying that *nous* is king of heaven and earth, immediately acknowledging that they must examine this question at greater length; by 30c, however, there won't be any doubts left that we can *dikaiotata* call the cause of the universe *sophia kai nous*.

lies in *summetria* providing structure and unity between its components (64d-e).

IV. UNIVERSE AND MICROCOSM

We have seen that the postulation of a Cosmic Mind appears in the context of a macro-microcosm analogy. This analogy postulates all the elements in us as inferior to and less pure than those of the universe, where the same things, body and soul, exist as *pantêi kalliona* (30a, 29b ff.). As in the *Timaeus* (42e-43a, 41d-e), so in the *Philebus*, not only do our bodies derive from the Body of the Universe, but also our souls appear to derive from the World-Soul, and in that respect there is kinship between both, though the former are of lesser pedigree than the latter, and the superiority of the source immediately establishes it as a model for our human behaviour.

The fact that it is not chance that prevails over the universe rules out that the latter be *ataktôs* (29a4, cf. 28c-e); contrarily, the world can be a real *kosmos* by virtue of a rational cause *kosmousa kai suntattousa* (30c5). The rule of *nous*, then, guarantees for the cosmos the prevalance of order, and in that sense the mixture between *peras* and *apeiron* of which it is constituted seems to be reasonably stable. By contrast, the mixture in human beings also composed of *peras* and *apeiron* (cf. 32a9-b1) is unstable: its natural balance between those two elements can deteriorate and provoke pain, like thirst (31d-32b); in this kind of pain arising from the body -and corresponding pleasure of replenishment (cf. 42c9-d7, 45a ff.) - it is *apeiron*, not *peras* that prevails (cf. 41c-d, 52c).[32] However, despite the assault of these desires, and despite the fact that many people

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[32] For the tendency to excess inbuilt in mixed physical pleasure cf. Gosling and Taylor (1982: 137-8).

would prefer the most intense pleasures thus choosing a kind of life based on the instability of *genesis*- which however has the disadvantage that it brings with it also *phthora* (54e-55a) and hinders thought (63d-e)-, we are, in the *Philebus*, conversely recommended to go for *stable* mixtures: it is by discovering "the fairest and most peaceful mixture" (*kallistên... kai astasiastotatên meixin*)[33] of pleasure and mind that we shall learn what is good (63e-64a). But it is *peras* -or, in other words, *metron kai summetron*- which guarantees stability (cf. 24d); a good mixture is a structured mixture and if it lacks proportion it is destroyed as such (cf. *apollusi*, 64d11).

In this way, we want to make of our lives, subject to all sorts of disruptions and fluctuations coming from the body (42c-d), a mixture which is stable -like that of the universe. Indeed we should, like craftsmen (*kathaperei dêmiourgois*), make (*dêmiourgein*) the right mixture in our lives (cf. 59d10-e3), in which our good and happiness consist. But this is an enterprise for us to undertake (cf. *dei*, 59e2), by contrast with the demiurgic cause of the universe, whose rule is a fact. And the mixture that is announced in words is only a prelude to the one we should achieve in actual practice.

If this is so, then the setting of a macrocosmic background for human life in the *Philebus* is not accidental. Microcosmic order should be a reflection and part of the macrocosmic one. Understanding how the cosmic cause works, as *kosmousa kai suntattousa* (30c5) -an order that in turn manifests beauty and goodness- can, accordingly, help us order our lives towards the good. This good, lying in measure and proportion, is choiceworthy (*hairetos*, 22b, cf. 61a), what every

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[33] *astasiastotatên*: literally "the most free from strife"; remember the strife (*diaphora*) of contraries conveyed by *apeiron* which is made to cease by *peras* at 25e1.

rational being (*pan to gignôskon*) hunts and desires, wishing to catch and possess it (20d). However, Plato also allows for the possibility that we might choose other things (cf. *alla hêireith'* 22b6; also 55a5-6), even though it would be against the nature of the truly choiceworthy and outside the scope of rational will (*akôn*), often through ignorance (22b6-8). It seems, then, that we have an open choice as to what kind of life we pursue, and it is important to prevent *agnoia*: it is important that we educate that choice. In this respect, reading the *Philebus* may itself prove instructive: Plato has Socrates himself assert, after scrutinizing in what exactly the good consists: "the present argument appears to me to have been completed, like an incorporeal order which is to rule fairly an ensouled body" (*kosmos tis asômatos arxôn kalôs empsuchou sômatos*, 64b7). And this refers to an argument, we must remember, that has attempted to establish what is good "both in man and in the universe" (*en t' anthrôpôi kai tôi panti*, 64a1-2).

We see, then, how despite the apparently few explicit connections between macro and microcosm, the *Philebus* does provide, to close examination, elements that establish cosmology as a background for ethics, as much as, from a different perspective (and more expressly), we could find in the *Timaeus* that our following the orderly motions of the universe could directly contribute to ordering our souls and in this way bring about human happiness.

In the next section of this chapter I wish to focus in more detail on the cosmologies of these two dialogues, and see up to what extent the brief cosmological allusions of the *Philebus* can find a counterpart in the lengthy treatment of the *Timaeus*.

V. THE COSMOLOGIES OF THE PHILEBUS AND THE TIMAEUS COMPARED

As Hackforth points out, the cosmology in each of these dialogues shows a fundamental difference in their way of exposition: whereas the *Timaeus* is more mythical and narrates how the universe came into being out of a preexisting chaos, the *Philebus* is more discursive and just analyses the *actual* world of our experience into its constituents (cf. *ta nun onta en tôi panti,* 23c4).[34] In addition, it is evident that the context of the *Philebus* passage is mainly that of an ethical discussion, whereas the cosmology of the *Timaeus* is more lengthy and self-contained, and the dialogue form is missing. Thirdly, the fourfold classification is inserted in a divisional context, where Plato is trying to group subclasses of mixture, *peras* and *apeiron* into more general definitory classes; in the *Timaeus* the divisional procedure is less prominent. Still, I think there are some cosmological similarities between these dialogues so that a comparison with the *Timaeus* may prove useful in further highlighting the cosmological implications of the fourfould classification and showing it to be more than a mere cosmology *"ad hoc"*.[35]

1. Aitia, Demiurge and the World-Soul

The *Philebus* makes the *aitia* correspond to *nous* in a manner that reminds us of the "primary causes" in *Tim.* 46e4, those "*aitiai* which, by using intelligence (*meta nou*), are *dêmiourgoi* of fair and good effects". In relation to this passage I have, in chapter 2, interpreted the Demiurge as a symbol of the concept of primary causation in the *Timaeus* -understood basically in an efficient sense-, a function which is in turn

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[34] Cf. Hackforth (1945: 37).
[35] As has been interpreted by Davis (1979: 132-3), Teloh (1981: 188).

fulfilled by the World-Intelligence or Soul. Being discursive and non-mythical, the *Philebus* does not explicitly appeal to the image of the Demiurge as such. However, the cause is called *"to dêmiourgoun"* and *"to poioun"* (27b1-2, 26e6-8, 27a5), which, now in a more impersonal and demythologized way, reminds us of the character of *poiêtês* and *dêmiourgos* that belongs to the god in the *Timaeus* (cf. 28c3, 29a3). In both dialogues this kind of cause is posited to account for everything that is generated (cf. *Phil.* 26e, *Tim.* 28a, c), and is thus called *archê geneseôs* in one case (*Tim.* 29e4), *aitia geneseôs* in the other (*Phil.* 27b9). While the *Timaeus* distinguishes between this primary or divine kind of causation and a level of secondary, auxiliary or subservient causes (*hupêretousai,* cf. 68e4-5) for the fulfilment of teleology, the *Philebus* similarly distinguishes the cause from "that which serves the cause towards generation" (*to douleuon eis genesin aitiâi,* 27a8-9), and in both dialogues it is further suggested that without *nous* only random and disorderly effects occur (*Phil.* 28e-29a, *Tim.* 46e5-6).[36] In both works this *nous*, which as such cannot arise in separation from soul (*Phil.* 30c9-10, *Tim.* 30b3), has the function not only of originating but also governing its orderly product (cf. *Phil.* 26e-27b, 28d-e, 30c; *Tim.* 28a-29a, 29e-30a, 34b10-35a1, 42e1-3, etc.). Also, as we have seen, the cause which "orders and arranges years and seasons and months" -called wisdom and mind- in the *Philebus* (30c5-7), reminds us of the World-Soul in the *Timaeus* which, through its intelligent revolution, generates nights, days, months, years and other periods (cf. 39c). Furthermore, the cause seems to have an important teleological function, since in the *Timaeus* it is productive of fair and good effects (46e4), whereas in the *Philebus* it produces right mixtures by the imposition

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[36] That is to say, if, as the context suggests in the *Philebus*, the cause is *nous*, then the product is good, *i.e.* it exhibits *peras* (cf. also *infra*, section 5.3), and so in this dialogue (as in the *Timaeus*) there are factors that are needed as subservient to teleology.

of limit, which is, as we shall see, understood in terms of beauty and goodness. This teleological function will, in turn, be enlightened by the analysis of its interaction with *to apeiron*.

2. The sensible universe as a mixture

We have seen that in the *Philebus* things in the universe falling under the class of the mixture are called *ta gignomena* (27a11), also called the "offspring" (*ekgonon*, 26d8) of *peras* and *apeiron*; and that this class also includes the universe itself.[37] Similarly, in *Tim.* 50c7-d4 reality is divided into kinds and the sensible realm is called *to gignomenon* and, metaphorically, "*ekgonon*", though this time Ideas are compared to a father and Space to a mother. This could lead us to suppose, with some interpreters,[38] that *peras* and *apeiron* in the *Philebus* correspond respectively with Ideas and Space in the *Timaeus*. I think however that this identification needs to be revised. *Peras*, I shall suggest, performs in the *Philebus* not so much the role attributed to transcendent Ideas in the *Timaeus* but is more comparable with the immanent mathematical structure imposed by the Demiurge on the sensible universe; whereas, on the other hand, I wish to stress the connections between *apeiron* in the *Philebus* and necessity (*anankê*) in the *Timaeus*. The new terms of this comparison of *apeiron* with *anankê*, rather than with *chôra*, will have two sorts of consequences: firstly, my interpretation will differ from that which has standardly been given by those who attribute some cosmological importance to the fourfold classification of

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[37] For the universe as mixture cf. *supra*, section 3.3. In addition, let us notice that *Nous* rules *ta sumpanta kai tode to kaloumenon holon* (28d), the function of ruling in turn corresponding to the cause of the mixture or *to gignomenon* at *Phil.* 27a.

[38] Cf. e.g. MacClintock (1961: 49 n.4); Friedlaender (1969: 324-5); Brisson (1974: 102-3); Benitez (1989: 74-80). For *apeiron* as *chôra* see also Bury (1897: xlvii), for *peras* as Ideas see Grube (1980: 301-4).

the *Philebus*; secondly, it will offer an alternative solution for those who, having found the comparison between *apeiron* and *chôra* implausible, have been led to query the cosmological importance or coherence of the passage in the *Philebus*.[39]

In the following sections I shall attempt to justify my view. For the moment, the comparison between *apeiron* and *anankê* can be supported by a passage in the *Timaeus* which actually calls the universe a mixture, as we saw in the *Philebus*. At *Tim*. 47e5-48a2 we read that the cosmos was generated as a "mixture arising from the combination of *anankê* and *nous*" (*memeigmenê.. ex anankês te kai nou sustaseôs*; cf. *Phil*. 23d1: *ex amphoin* [i.e. *peras* and *apeiron*]...*summisgomenon*). This, on the one hand, suggests a correspondence of *apeiron* with *anankê*. On the other hand, the correspondence may seem broken by the fact that the *Timaeus* speaks of *nous*, rather than of *peras*, as being mixed with *anankê*. However, we must remember that the *Philebus* too speaks of *nous* -as well as *peras*- as being mixed with *apeiron*; a prominent example of this is when Plato speaks of the good life as a mixture of intelligence and pleasure (27d, 59d-e). As we shall see, this ambiguity may be explained if we consider that the presence of *nous* in the mixture implies the presence of *peras*, and viceversa.[40]

3. Peras as immanent mathematical structure

As I said, I do not think that *peras* in this passage of the *Philebus* can strictly speaking be the Ideas as transcendent paradigms in the way they are presented in the *Timaeus* (e.g. 29a, 48e). *Peras* here is mixed with the unlimited, whereas the Idea in the *Timaeus* "neither

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[39] In this line cf. e.g. Teloh (1981: 188) and McCabe (1994: 250-1 and 255 n.73).
[40] See note 44.

receives anything else into itself from anywhere else nor itself goes into anything else anywhere" (52a2-3). Even at the end of the *Philebus* (59c4) Ideas are called "*ameiktotata echonta*" (cf. *Symp*. 211e1).

In addition, Ideas are ungenerated in the *Timaeus* (cf. 52a1-2) as well as in the *Philebus* (cf. *ta onta aei* as opposed to *gignomena* at 59a7), whereas *peras* is said to be created. This is suggested by the recurrent use of the verb *apergazesthai*. Thus, e.g. "in the high and the low, the quick and the slow, which are unlimited, the introduction[41] of these same things (*sc*. the equal, double, etc.) created at the same time limit *(peras apeirgasato*) and constructed most perfectly the whole art of music"; and "[these] introduced (*engenomena*)[42] into winters and heatwaves, removed the great excess and *apeiron*, and created measure and at the same time proportion *(to emmetron kai hama summetron apeirgasato*)" (26a). In general, the mixture is a "generation towards being from the measures created with limit" (*ek tôn meta tou peratos apeirgasmenôn metrôn*, 26d8-9). These passages seem to suggest that *peras* is regarded as something that is brought to the mixture and then becomes part of the mixture.[43] This introduction of *peras* creates *peras* in the mixture, and one could wonder what it is that effects that introduction. The obvious answer would seem to be the cause, even though Plato does not mention it explicitly in these passages since here he is discussing the third kind and hasn't yet started considering the

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[41] Following Fowler's and D. Frede's reading of the text -after the MSS.- instead of Burnet's. Cf. Fowler (1925: *ad loc.*); Frede (1993: 22).

[42] Following Fowler's reading *ad loc.* -after manuscript B- instead of Burnet's. Cf. Fowler (1925: *ad loc.*).

[43] We can take this vocabulary as simply considering, first, *peras* in abstraction from the mixture, and then, as part of it. If Plato were meaning that *peras* in the first case is the Idea, then we would have the problem of how the Ideas could be mixed or introduced (*engignomena*, *engenomena* 26a3, 6), something that, as we have seen, Plato denies of Ideas both in *Philebus* and *Timaeus*.

fourth.[44] If this is so, then the comparison with the *Timaeus* becomes clearer. There we read that the Demiurge "produces" (cf. *apergazêtai*) the form (*idea*) of something looking to a model (28a6-8); and in general Plato recurrently speaks of the Demiurge with the function of *apergazesthai* the world or its parts (cf. 29a1, 30b6, 37c8-d1, 40a3, etc.). So *peras* in the *Philebus* would be nearer to the immanent form that the Demiurge produces in something rather than the model he looks to in the *Timaeus*.

With this I am not denying that Ideas may be relevant for the cosmology of the *Philebus*. They are certainly alluded to in the dialogue, as the stable, unmixed and immutable being opposed to generated realities (cf. 15a, 58a, 59c, 61d-e, 62a), and it is they that provide -in their identity and eternity- a parameter of stability or *bebaiotês* (59b-c), so that any stability conveyed by *peras* or mathematical proportion (cf. *Phil.* 24d4-5, 25d11-e2), as would be manifest most of all in the case of the universe, could reasonably be thought to be ultimately relying on the former, particularly given that Ideas are the object of *nous* in its most proper form (cf. 59c-d).[45]

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[44] At some other passages Plato speaks of *peras* not as being realized (*apeirgasmenon*) but as itself having the function of *apergazesthai* or having a more active role on the unlimited. E.g. at 25e1-2 *peras* "makes the opposites proportionate and harmonious (*summetra kai sumphôna apergazetai*) by introducing number"; and at 27d9 *to apeiron* is said to be bound by the agency of limit (*hupo tou peratos*). What is the agent then, *peras* or *nous*? We could follow Hackforth in thinking that whether we say that it is reason or limit that modifies the nature of the unlimited matters little, "when we remember that all the *metra* that characterize good *meikta* are *meta tou peratos apeirgasmena* by the causality of *nous*" ([1945: 134], cf. *Phil.* 26d9). So, strictly speaking, it should be *nous* as cause that has an active power on the unlimited *with the help of* the limit it introduces.
The seemingly active vocabulary that Plato uses of *peras* before the introduction of the cause can also be seen as influenced by Philolaos, who speaks of *perainonta* -rather than *peras*- with an active role on *apeira* (cf. B1 and B2 DK), and who doesn't include the cause in his scheme, as Plato is about to do.

[45] Unlike the *Timaeus*, in the *Philebus* there is no mention of Ideas as paradigms for the activity of the demiurgic cause. Hackforth (1945: 41) and Ross (1951: 138) have however seen recourse to a

Another important passage for the comprehension of *peras* and its role is to be found at the end of the *Philebus*. There Plato wonders again about the cause (*aitia*, 64d4) of the mixed life that makes it good, and now finds the answer in measure and proportion, which is in turn inseparable from beauty and excellence (64d-e). Plato's concern here is basically with the cause in the mixture (cf. *tí...en têi summeixei...aition*, 64c5-6). So one can think that the cause at 64d4, taken as *metron kai summetron* at 64d9, corresponds to *peras*, which would now be considered as formal cause of the mixture, *i.e.* as the structure which makes it a mixture rather than (in Fowler's words) an "uncompounded jumble" (*akratos sumpephorêmenê* 64e1).[46] However, there is a further question posed by 65a. There Plato, after having identified measure with beauty and excellence (64e5-7), states "if we cannot capture the good through one idea,

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paradigm as required by the postulation of an artisan (cf. *to dêmiourgoun*, 27b1); whereas other interpreters (cf. those mentioned in n. 1), alleging absence of explicit evidence, have queried or denied transcendent Ideas in the *Philebus*. Paradeigmatism would indeed suggest transcendence. Fahrnkopf (1977: 202-5), against Shiner's (1974) support of "revisionism" -the theory that we do not tend to find transcendent Forms after the *Parmenides*- has argued in favour of the transcendence of the Ideas in the *Philebus* in the light of 62a-b, where Plato conceives of the possibility of someone knowing the divine Circle without knowing human circles, something that would be impossible if Ideas were merely immanent to or abstractable from sensibles. Other opponents of the revisionist view are e.g. Bolton (1975: 84-94), Mohr (1983), Benitez (1989: 4, 129-132), Hampton (1990: 9-11).

[46] We might certainly be struck by the fact that Plato starts his search for the cause of the mixture in the *Philebus* by positing *nous* as cause, and towards the end offers instead measure and proportion as the cause of the mixture. However, even at the beginning Plato seemed to be paving the way for his suggestions at the end, by saying not only that *nous* could be claimed to be the "cause" of the mixture in which the happy life consists (22d2), but also that *nous* is *sungenesteron kai homoioteron* to that through which the mixed life becomes good (22d4-8), something that will at the end of the *Philebus* include measure and proportion (as an aspect of the good, which also encompasses beauty and truth), as the cause that makes the mixture good (64c, d). To this, the text reiterates, *nous* will be *sungenesteron* and *homoiotaton* (65b1, c3, d3). So the answer to the question whether *nous* is a cause or not would be that it is akin to the cause in a formal sense, though it is itself the cause in an efficient sense.

let us grasp it with three: *kallos* and *summetria* and *alêtheia*" (65a1-2). The subsequent lines (*legômen hôs touto hoion hen orthotat'an aitiasaimeth'an tôn en têi summeixei*, 3-4) can be read as saying either:
(i) "and let us say that this, considered as one, we would most rightly give as cause of the things in the mixture"; or
(ii) "and let us say that, among the things in the mixture, we would most rightly give this, considered as one, as cause".

The first translation could encourage an interpretation of the good as being something other than the elements of the mixture -the latter including measure, proportion and truth- and so over and above the goodness inherent in the mixture;[47] in this way we could take the subsequent lines: "and through this, which is (*on*) good, the mixture has become (*gegonenai*) so". The second one, conversely, would be considering the good just as a property inherent in the mixture.[48]

It seems difficult to settle this ambiguity. The most we can say is that the Good, as Idea different from the mixture or its components, *might* be alluded to at the end of the *Philebus* -after all, the Good had been mentioned as one of those items escaping generation and corruption at 15a5 (and other items such as Justice Itself are mentioned in a similar context at 61d-62a); and it could have a causal aspect (cf. *dia touto* at 65a4). But, in any case, Plato certainly speaks of the good as at least *immanent to the mixture*.[49] If we take this in cosmological

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[47] As interpreted by Benitez (1989: 62), Hampton (1990: 83-4). Hackforth (1945: 136) and D. Frede (1993: 80) also adopt reading (i).
[48] This reading is followed by Fowler (1925: *ad loc.*), Gosling (1975: 65).
[49] Remember the concern with the cause *en têi summeixei*, 64c5-6, which is found in *metron*, beauty and excellence at 64d-e. Note also that the *alêtheia* which appears as an aspect of the good at 65a2 is regarded as mixed at 64e9-10; cf. *meixomen alêtheian* at 64b2. In addition, the original question about the good was framed in terms

terms, we can compare it with Plato's allusions in the *Timaeus* to an immanent goodness of the world that the Demiurge tries to realize (46c8-d1 *tên tou aristou...idean apotelôn* and *Tim.* 68e5: God is *to eu tektainomenos en pasin tois gignomenois*).[50] The *Timaeus* also -like the *Philebus*- stresses the interrelation between *kalon*, *agathon* and *summetron*, 87c4-6. Now, if in the *Philebus peras* is connected with *to summetron* and *metron* (25e-26a, 26d8-9), and these are in turn aspects of the good in 64d-65a, we can see that *peras* has a strong teleological import.[51] In this respect, the cause as *nous* would be responsible for the actual fulfilment of teleology insofar as its imposition of limit upon the unlimited involves giving a good arrangement to the materials upon which it works.

More precisely, *peras* would correspond to the immanent *mathematical structure* that the Cosmic Intelligence introduces, both in the *Philebus* and in the *Timaeus*, into the indeterminacy of its materials. Thus, we read in the *Timaeus* that, when everything was in a state of disorder (*ametrôs*), god gave structure to it with forms and numbers (*dieschêmatisato eidesi te kai arithmois*, 53a7-b5). Likewise, we have seen that in the *Philebus peras* is "whatever stops opposites being different from one another, and by introducing number, makes them proportionate and harmonious" (*summetra de kai sumphôna entheisa arithmon apergazetai*, 25d11-e2). This could in turn be connected with the geometrical construction of the Cosmic Body from elementary triangles in *Tim.* 53b ff. and the "measures" (*summetrias*) introduced by god when

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of that which is found in the mixture (cf. 64a1-2: *en tautêi [*sc. *meixei kai krasei]...tí...pephuken agathon*).

[50] The immanence of this good which is being framed in the *Timaeus* is suggested both by the expression "*en pasin tois gignomenois*" and by the fact that at 28c6 god is said to be the framer (*tektainomenos*) of the universe, by contrast with the paradigm to which he looks. Cf. also *supra,* ch. 2, n. 41.

[51] Cf. Gadamer (1991: 139).

everything was in disorder (*Tim.* 69b).[52] Thus it is mathematical proportion in the sensible universe which makes it intelligible despite its underlying indeterminacy.[53] In this way, the sensible universe ceases to be mere becoming (*genesis*)[54] and becomes a *genesis eis ousian*, a becoming that approaches the true being by virtue of the presence of *peras* in it.[55]

4. Apeiron and ananke

Now, if we are to compare *apeiron* in the *Philebus* with a similar factor in the *Timaeus*, I think it does not have to do with *chôra* if taken as an *en hôi* or mere spatial framework of phenomena. *Chôra* in itself is a *tode* or *touto*, *Tim.* 50a1-2 (this suggesting something stable,

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[52] Cf. Ross (1951: 137). I do not think however that these triangles and the corpuscles they constitute can be related to the "intermediate mathematical objects known to us from Aristotle", as Hackforth (1945: 41) contends. In fact, even if we take Aristotle's report as trustworthy, the latter are immutable and eternal -cf. *Metaph.* I 6 987b14-18-, whereas it is a characteristic property of the elementary particles in the *Timaeus* to be always in motion, 58c, cf. 57a-c.

[53] Indeterminacy in an ontological sense implies an epistemological one, as is suggested by the fact that the lack of measure would make all arts or knowledge insignificant and mere guesswork (*Phil.* 55e-56a). For the importance of mathematics as the basis of the intelligibility of the sensible world in the *Timaeus*, cf. Brisson (1991: 33 ff.).

[54] According to this interpretation "mere becoming" should correspond to *to apeiron*, things of this class being called *gignomena* at 24e7-8 (cf. pleasure called *apeiron* -27e- and *genesis* -54c-55a) and said to *prochôrein kai ou menein* at 24d4, as if suggesting no stability at all. Thus becoming is twofold, alluding both to this kind (sheer becoming) and *genesis eis ousian*, which exhibits, in the case of the sensible world, fairly stable mathematical proportions (in this latter sense the mixture is called *gignomenon* or *genesis* at 26d8, e3, 27a1, b9). For this distinction between two kinds of *gignomena* in the *Philebus* see also D. Frede (1993: lvii); from another perspective, see also Turnbull's view (1988: 1-14, esp. 13-14 on *Phil.*) on the "two worlds of becoming" in *Philebus* and *Timaeus* with Fine's response, which basically agrees with the distinction (1988b: 15-6). Cf. *supra*, note 19.

[55] Cf. Gadamer (1991: 138).

49e3)[56] and is intrinsically deprived of every quality (50d-51a).[57]

Rather, it can be compared with the *contents* of *chôra*, or, more specifically, the "necessary" properties of the four primary bodies considered in abstraction from intelligent activity and upon which the Demiurge works by imposing quantitative or geometrical determination (as happens from 53b onwards).[58] In fact, we can take this *anankê* (47e5, 48a1) or wandering cause (48a6-7) as related to the *pathê* of fire, water, air and earth (48b5) which fill the receptacle before or in abstraction from their arrangement as bodies *i.e.* those *dunameis* which are said to be "neither similar nor equally balanced" (*mêth' homoiôn dunameôn mête isorropôn*, 52e2).[59] Among these *pathê* or *dunameis* we can count hot and cold (cf. *thermon*

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[56] Even though *chôra* is precosmically described as unbalanced at 52e, it is said to be so not *per se* but because of the uneven motion of its contents.

[57] Cf. also *Phil.* 24d2, where the opposites seem to be distinguished from the *chôra* they occupy -which is said as in the *Timaeus* (cf. note below) to be an *en hêi.*

[58] Some scholars, however, identify space with its contents, by taking *chôra* not only as the *en hôi* -as Plato says, cf. 49e7, 50d1, 6-, but also as the *ex hou* something is made, so that *chôra* turns out to have not only a spatial but also a constitutive aspect -as "matter" in the Aristotelean sense; cf. e.g. Friedlaender (1958: 250); Brisson (1991: 28-9), (1992a: 33). If we take that line, the distinction between *anankê* and *chôra* is blurred, though I think the text gives us good reason to maintain it. The *ex hou* of which something is made, properly speaking, is, in a chaotic world, the traces of the four elements, and, in the present *kosmos,* the elementary triangles as *stoicheia* of everything (54b3, cf. 53c8-d1, 55a-b) (cf. Vlastos [1975: 69 ff.]), rather than *chôra*. (Although the analogy of *chôra* with gold -50a-b- and perfume -50e- may be thought to suggest that *chôra* is a material of some kind, the point of the analogies seems to be, in the one case, the changelessness of *chôra,* 49e-50a, 50b5-c2 (cf. M.L. Gill [1987: 45-7]), and, in the other case, its lack of form, 50e-51a.) In fact, at *Tim.* 51a6 *chôra* is explicitly said not to be the *ex hôn tauta gegone -tauta* referring to the four kinds. Note also that *chôra* is distinguished from *genesis* even in a precosmic state at 52d2-4. On the other hand, an essential property of *chôra* is having no qualities -so that it can receive all of them, cf. 50d ff. (on this see Keyt [1961: 299-300]); whereas a distinctive feature of the *anankaiai dunameis* that fill in *chôra* in the *Timaeus* -and of *apeiron* in the *Philebus*- is to be or have opposite properties.

[59] Cf. Cornford (1937: 173-6, 181 ff., 202-3).

kai psuchron considered as *dunameis* related to the four elements at 32c-33a, and *thermon* as one of the opposites *-enantiôn-* from which *-ek toutôn-* other things are derived at 50a2-4), dense and rare, heavy and light (*puknos-manos, barus-kouphos*, 53a). We can see that there is here a first point of connection with the *Philebus* insofar as *apeiron* there is related to pairs of opposite properties without measure, among which hot and cold are explicitly mentioned.

In addition, the contents of *chôra* in a precosmic state are described in the *Timaeus* as those *ichnê* of the four primary bodies which behaved without order or measure before the generation of the universe (*alogôs kai ametrôs*, *Tim*. 53a-b). Similarly, *apeiron* in the *Philebus* is set in sharp contrast with *peras* and therefore with *taxis and metron* (cf. 26b10, d9).[60]

In the *Timaeus*, the precosmic state of these contents is depicted as "not being at rest but moving with disharmony and disorder" (*plêmmelôs kai ataktôs*, 30a4-5); likewise, *apeiron* in the *Philebus* is described as being in motion and not at rest (24d4), and the conflict of these opposites is made to cease by the introduction of number, which makes them proportionate and harmonious (24c1-d7, 25d11-e2). In the *Timaeus* these properties seem to be dispersed or divided before the activity of the cause (cf. 52e-53a), which harmonizes them in order to achieve "friendliness" and unity in the World-Body (32c, 31c). Similarly, in the *Philebus to apeiron* is in a state of disconnection and division as long as it is not "bound by limit" (*hupo tou peratos dedemenon*, 27d9).

In fact, *apeiron* in *Phil*. 23c ff. has not only a cosmological meaning, but seems to have a wider sense, insofar as it is meant to apply to every aspect of human

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[60] Cf. Hackforth (1945: 40); Ross (1951: 137).

life which is *ateles*, such as bodily pleasure. However, we must remember that, despite the predominant cosmological meaning of *anankê* in the *Timaeus*, this dialogue does not overlook the analogy between macro and microcosm. Thus, in *Tim.* 42a3-b1 and 69c8-d6 opposite (*enantiôs,* 42b1) *pathêmata* such as pleasure and pain - arising as a result of the conjoining of a soul to a mortal body- are regarded as "necessary" (*anankaia, ex anankês*); and these kinds of irrational affections in man constitute the element of "necessity" inherent in human nature[61] which human *nous* must control and persuade, in the same manner as the Demiurge works on the precosmic necessity.

5. Teleology versus chance

Some further connections between the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus* can be established in respect of the contraposition between *tuchê* and *nous* which is present in both dialogues.

As far as the *Timaeus* is concerned, we have seen in chapter 2 that the necessary causes, if deprived of intelligence (*monôtheisai phronêseôs*), produce random and disorderly effects (*to tuchon atakton exergazontai*, 46e5-6); so that *anankê* in abstraction from *nous* could be regarded as equivalent to *tuchê*. Only under the control of *Nous* will it become an auxiliary cause for teleology.

Similarly, in the *Philebus* (28d-29a) Socrates asks whether we should say that "the universe is governed by the power of the irrational and random and mere chance" (*tên tou alogou kai eikêi dunamin kai to hopêi etuchen*) or whether, on the contrary, "mind and some wondrous wisdom order and govern it" (28d5-9). The answer is that the universe is not disorderly and therefore it is *nous*

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[61] Cf. Festugière (1949: 111-3).

(and not chance) that governs it. If *apeiron* corresponds to brute necessity, and this to chance, then we could infer that also in the *Philebus to apeiron* is related to *tuchê*. Indeed, this correspondence is supported by the fact that *tuchê* at 28d-29a is related to *ataxia* (cf. esp. 28d7 with 29a4), which, we have seen, is in turn a feature of *to apeiron*. In this way, the action of the cause will be to impose order upon the chaotic and random indeterminacy of the sensible.

We can also see that, just as in the *Timaeus anankê* could by itself constitute a hindrance if unchecked by *nous* - though for the most part it was liable to intelligent persuasion-,[62] so in the *Philebus apeiron* shows this tendency particularly in the microsphere. Thus, for example, pleasures attendant on the satisfaction of physical needs, which, as we have seen, are intrinsically *apeiron* (for example the pleasure which follows satisfaction of hunger) can be made subservient to teleology, insofar as the good life for man cannot be achieved without the restoration of the balance of an organism which these pleasures accompany. In this way that kind of life must include those inevitable pleasures (cf. *anankaiai*, 62e9). But given that this life is posited as *prescriptive* for man, it seems that there do also exist, in actual human lives, pleasures which exhibit the condition of *apeiron*, not subdued by *summetria*.

So it can be said that, at a cosmic level, the prevalence of *Nous* over chance, necessity or the unlimited is a given *fact*, worthy of the aspect of the heaven (*Phil.* 28e). For human beings, on the contrary, it is a *task*; and it depends on us whether, in the pursuit of the good, we succumb to an irrational life of excessive pleasure or else decide to govern it (cf. 45d-e) by means of the *nous*

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[62] Cf. *supra*, ch. 2, section 1.3.

which we derive from the cosmic cause. It is for this kind of ethical problem that the cosmological passage we have been discussing serves to establish the appropriate background, since -as we have seen- it is equally important to learn "what is good, both in man and in the universe" (64a1-2).

VI. CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have tried to stress the cosmological importance and meaning of the fourfold classification at *Phil*. 23c-31a. In this context, the cause has appeared preeminently as an ensouled intellect in the universe, responsible for the latter's fairness and stable proportions by virtue of the imposition of *peras*, or mathematical measure, upon the quantitative indeterminacy of *to apeiron,* as much as the Demiurge in the *Timaeus* appears as a cause responsible for imposing mathematical proportion upon the necessary qualities of the precosmic materials thus constituting an agent of teleology. This cause -and the universe in general as a mixture-, I have argued, stands as a model for human beings, who must attempt to achieve in their lives, as far as possible, a stable mixture of intellect and pleasure in which the good for them, *i.e.* happiness, consists. In this way the apparently digressive cosmology of the *Philebus* stands as directly relevant for the ethical purposes of the dialogue. In addition, far from appearing as a merely *ad hoc* cosmology, it has proved susceptible to fertile comparison with the cosmology of the *Timaeus*.

CHAPTER 5

GOD AND OPPOSITE CYCLES IN THE MYTH OF THE *POLITICUS*

We have seen that it seems to be a strong cosmological claim in Plato's late dialogues that the world as a *kosmos* is orderly due to the presence of a designing *nous* that orders it (*Phil*. 28c ff., *Tim*. 46c-e, 48a; we shall see so also in *Laws* -e.g. XII 966d-e, 967d-e-, cf. *infra*, chapter 7, section 3.2); a *nous* which is described as god, whose governance over the universe is vigorously defended against materialistic opponents who conversely propose chance, spontaneity, necessity or, in general, principles devoid of purpose and intelligence in their account of the universe (*Soph*. 265b-266b, *Phil*. 28d, *Tim*. 46c-e, cf. *Laws* X 888d ff. and *infra*, chapter 7, section 1). So, both claims: that the universe in its actual state is beautiful and good, that is to say, orderly, and that this order is due to the governance of *nous*, seem to go hand in hand, and more than once the first claim is taken as a premiss from which to infer the second, in a kind of teleological argument (cf. *Phil*. 28e, *Laws* X 897b-898c, XII 966d-e).[1]

Now, together with this evidence, there is on the other hand the *Politicus* myth, which speaks of periods in which god guides the world and those in which he doesn't, and so contraposes a Golden Age guided by god with a subsequent period when god releases his governance of the universe, until everything goes so wrong that god has to return to the helm and restore order. The human race at this new stage, however, is said to have to resort *on its own* to ways of surviving in a more hostile universe

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[1] On the *Laws* see also *infra*, ch. 7, section 3.2. In addition, the goodness of the world -and therefore its order, since *to kalon ouk ametron*, *Tim*. 87c5- is treated as a *factum* in *Tim*. 29a5, as already at *Phaedo* 99c1-2.

which contrasts with the one depicted in the Golden Age. If this is so, and if we compare this with what we have stated in the previous paragraph, it would be very striking if the *Politicus* myth were claiming that we are now living in a period when god is not exerting his governance, as some renowned interpreters of Plato such as Cornford and Skemp, and with them the majority of interpreters of the dialogue, have supposed.[2] And perhaps they may have been led to do so by some obscurities which make the *Politicus* myth particularly difficult to interpret. On the other hand, Brisson has more recently challenged that interpretation by suggesting that the period in which we now live is neither one of complete guidance by god, nor one where the corporeal element or chance prevails in the universe, but an intermediate state in which *nous* and *anankê* coexist, though with a predominance of intellect which would make the *Politicus* compatible with analogous pictures given in the other dialogues (cf. e.g. *Tim.* 47e-48a).[3] I agree with Brisson's basic suggestion, and I undertake to defend in detail the thesis that, according to a literal reading of the myth, we are living in a period of guidance of god. Nonetheless, I also want to draw attention to passages in the myth which seem open to either interpretation, and I shall attempt to see if they too can be incorporated into a coherent picture.

I mentioned that there have been advocates of either view, that the present cycle according to a literal reading of the myth is one of absence of god and that it is conversely under the guidance of god. The former and widespread view has seen the *Politicus* as dealing mainly with the opposition between two cycles, that of Cronus and that of Zeus, by taking the two as going in opposite

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[2] Cf. e.g. Cornford (1937: 206-7); Skemp (1952: 114); Diès (1935: xxxiii); Rosen (1979: 75-6); Miller (1980: 39); Scodel (1987: 77, 79); Ferrari (1992); Hirsch (1992); Dorter (1994: 192-3). The idea seems also suggested by Owen (1973: 352) and Guthrie (1978: 182).

[3] Cf.Brisson (1974: 478-96) and (1992b).

cosmic directions and the latter as one of those periods of absence of god, when the universe is left to itself.[4] But curiously enough none of the adherents of this view seems to have attempted to sketch a reading which takes account of the evidence of the whole myth. They often tend to fasten on one or other passage of a much more complex myth which could also contain counter-evidence for their claim. On the other hand, there are some details of the myth that could challenge the alternative interpretation. It is therefore worth examining both cases, for and against a rule of god in the present period, and from there trying to draw conclusions that could help us understand why the matter is as complicated as it seems to be, sometimes almost resisting literal consistency. The latter circumstance would of course not be surprising for someone who is used to the style of the Platonic myths as opposed to *logoi* or argumentative discourse in the strict sense, but still could, in this particular case, draw our attention to a special openness which, instead of being a defect, could perhaps be a sign of the richness of the Platonic myth we are considering.

In fact it looks as if the main body of the myth suggests that we are currently in a period of god's guidance (268e8-273e4), but by the end, in its appendix (273e6-274e1), some evidence can be taken as suggestive of the opposite view. In trying to account for this, I shall start by defending the reading of the main body of the text (268e8 ff., esp. 269c4-273e4) as presenting a view of the present universe as being in one of those cycles ruled by god. While doing so I shall attempt to show why at some points the contrary reading of the myth fails to make sense or interpret correctly some crucial

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[4] The very recent translation and commentary of the *Politicus* by Rowe (1995: 12-3) actually considers three cycles instead of the standard interpretation which has two, though Rowe, far from the view that I wish to defend, believes that our age of Zeus, though still following the same direction as that of Cronus, is one which is *not* under divine care at all; in this latter sense then he has not departed from the traditional view.

parts of the text. After that I shall consider the appendix of the myth and try to account for it in the light of my overall reading of the text.

I shall proceed by following mainly the sequential order of the text and inserting my view into a description of the overall picture of the cosmic cycles in the myth. This procedure is independent from any adherence to a literal reading or not.[5] Rather, it is a preliminary step to any further discussion about the advantages and disadvantages of taking such reading literally. Though in both cases it at least suggests, in accordance with the other cosmological dialogues, that in our present period god's designing mind prevails in the universe.

I. PRELIMINARY REMARKS

The following pieces of evidence can be taken as crucial clues in suggesting that Plato is intending to give a picture which makes our cycle one ruled by god.

1. Plato proposes to integrate ancient *lechthenta* in the myth, among which there is the phenomenon concerning "the change in the setting and rising of the sun and the other stars, so that, from where it rises now, in that same place it set at that time, and it rose from the opposite place; and it was then when, bearing witness in favour of Atreus, the god changed it [*i.e.* the course of the sun and stars] to its present form" (*ho theos...metebalen auto epi to nun schêma*, 269a1-5). Here it is *the god* (Zeus, more specifically, in the legend which is being referred to) who changes the course of the heavenly motions,[6]

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[5] For a literal interpretation cf. T.M. Robinson (1967); Mohr (1978) and (1985: 141-57). Against, cf. Cornford (1937: 207); Festugière, (1949: 129-30); Cherniss (1954: 29 n. 44); Brisson (1974: 478-96); Ostenfeld (1982: 118); Naddaf (1993: 123); Rowe (1995: 13).

[6] Cf. Euripides, *Electra* 699-730; *Orestes* 996-1012, mentioned by Vidal-Naquet (1978: 136), for the reference to Zeus. It is striking that Rowe (1995: 187 *ad* 269a7) associates this phenomenon with what

something that will be characteristic of god's action at the beginning of the cycles of god's guidance in the myth, as opposed to those in which he merely lets go of the universe when it is left to itself in its reverse march (cf. e.g. 270a, 273e).[7] The present form of the motion of the universe would therefore have its cause in god and would be suggestive of his presence.[8]

2. At 272b2-3 the present era (*ton nuni*) is characterized as that of Zeus, in a way that conforms to 1. Nothing can be made of the fact that the Eleatic Stranger alludes to the age of Zeus as "this [life] which is said to be in the presence of Zeus" (*tonde d' hon logos epi Dios einai*), as if he were not himself endorsing that saying.[9] For the guise of the myth is to *incorporate* popular legends (cf. *lechthenta,* 268e8), not to reject them: "All these things, and also many others, arise from the same phenomenon..., but because of the large amount of time [that has passed] some of them have been lost, and others are told scatteredly (*diesparmena*), each separate from the other. But which is the phenomenon that is the cause of all these things, nobody has said, and should now be

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happens in the past age of Cronus (rather than the present age of Zeus). This claim may square with his denial that god guides (and therefore rules, cf. p. 192-3 *ad Pol.* 271d3-4) the direction of our present cosmic cycle; however, the claim is directly contradicted by the evidence, which speaks of the god of the legend changing the heavenly bodies to their *present* form.

[7] It cannot be held, as Dorter (1994: 193) implies, that it is "some more fundamental god" than Zeus or Cronus who both turns the universe in the age of Cronus and reverses its direction in the present age, given the text's denial that the same god could turn the universe in opposite directions (269e6-7, 269e9-270a1).

[8] Some of those who consider that we are presently living in a period *without* the guidance of god, cannot but accuse Plato of contradiction (as done by Scodel [1987: 80]) in the face of the evidence of the legend, which conversely shows god turning the universe to its present direction. Since that interpretation suggests that the universe is guided by god in the *opposite* cycle to the present one, the picture of the legend becomes doubly contradictory, given that the text denies explicitly that two different gods with opposing thoughts turn the universe in opposite directions (270a1-2). A non-contradictory reading, as I am attempting to set out, is obviously preferable.

[9] As contended by Scodel (1987: 80) and Rowe (1995: 193 *ad loc.*).

asserted" (269b5-c1). In addition, it would not seem right to disbelieve in this context, since in this regard the Stranger expresses complaints about the fact that many *logoi* like that about the *gêgeneis* "are, *incorrectly*, now disbelieved by many" (*logôn hoi nun hupo pollôn ouk orthôs apistountai*, 271b2-3).

3. With its emphasis on the close connection between macro and microcosm, the text states that the direction of ageing of individuals follows the direction of the cosmos (271b7-8; cf. 273e11-274a1, 274d6-7). In the age of Cronus it is said that souls fall into the earth as seed (272e3), with the implication that they follow the normal process of growth and death, like a plant. Similarly in the age of Zeus there is normal conception, generation and nurture of living beings (274a), which suggests that both the era of Cronus and that of Zeus follow the same direction of microcosmic events (from youth to old age, as opposed to contrary periods which would involve a reversal of the ageing process, from old to young) and so therefore should the macrocosm.[10]

Having, not exhaustively, highlighted these as basic points one could attempt to make the following consistent reading of the structure of the myth and the overall picture of cosmic cycles that it presents.

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[10] It is quite telling in this respect that the reversal of the ageing process is mentioned as the biggest phenomenon accompanying the cycle opposite to the present one (or, more literally, "accompanying the reversal of motion of the universe, at the time when the phase opposite to the present one takes place", 270d3-4, cf. 270d-e). Those interpreters who wish to contend that our era follows and is opposed in respect of direction to the one of Cronus are therefore led to postulate that in the latter era people were born from the earth as old and then grew young (cf. Vidal-Naquet [1978: 137] and Dillon [1992: 29]), or, conversely, that the growing younger of the old belongs to our present era (as contended by Scodel [1987: 79]), though they do so at the cost of overlooking the evidence above mentioned.

II. THE STATES OF THE COSMOS SUCCESSIVELY PRESENTED IN THE TEXT

1. Creation of the universe. God is described as the "begetter", "demiurge" and "father" of the cosmos (cf. e.g. 269d9, 270a5, 273b1-2), which indicates his creation of it -presumably after a precosmic state of *ataxia* due to the prevalence of the bodily condition of the universe prior to its creation (cf. 273b-c).

2. Overall description of the alternate cycles

At 269c4-d2 we read that:

a. *sometimes* (*tote men*) god himself "guides and helps the universe revolve as it goes" (*sumpodêgei poreuomenon kai sunkuklei*) 269c4-5. Cf. 270a3: *sometimes* (*tote men*) it [=the universe] is guided by a different, divine cause (*hup' allês sumpodêgeisthai theias aitias*).

b. *at some other times (tote de*) he lets the universe go (*anêken*), so that it "spontaneously goes back round in the opposite direction" (*palin automaton eis tanantia periagetai*), 269c5-7; this march is described as *anapalin ienai* (269d2). Cf. 270a5-7: *tote de* the universe is let go (cf. *anethêi*), and "goes itself by itself, released at such a moment as to go backwards" (*di' heautou auton ienai, kata kairon aphethenta toiouton, hôste anapalin poreuesthai*).

In view of expressions like *anapalin ienai* at 269d2, and *anapalin poreuesthai* at 270a6-7, we could call the latter the "reverse cycles", in the sense that the universe moves in a reverse direction.[11]

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[11] So we shall call "forward" those periods guided by god, and "reverse" those in which the universe is left to itself, without the the guidance of god. In any case, what is crucial is not to speak in

It is important to notice the role of god in this latter phase. He is not said to die or disappear, but to release control of the universe (cf. *anêken* 269c5, *anethêi* 270a5, *aphethenta,* 270a6, *aphemenos*, 272e4, *aphesis* 273c5) and to leave it or go off to his place of outlook (cf. *apestê*, 272e5), so that he stops having any direction over the course of the universe (since there cannot be two gods nor the same god turning it in opposite revolutions, 269e8-270a2), and does nothing, except observing passively what is going on from his place of outlook (272e5).

3. Present motion

Now, at 270b7-8 the Stranger summarizes the double picture, by saying "sometimes (*tote men*) the universe moves in the direction in which it *now* circles (*eph' ha* nun *kukleitai*); at some other times (*tote de*) it goes in the opposite direction (*epi tanantia*)". Here he does not define which cycle is reverse or which is forward (both are opposite as such), though, to go on with the order of exposition he has chosen above, at 269c-d and 270a, by which he first presents the forward cycle guided by god and secondly the reverse cycle, one could in principle suppose that "the direction in which the universe now circles", mentioned at 270b, corresponds to the forward cycles, *i.e.* the periods of god's guidance. (Cf. *tote men* at 269c4 and 270a3, referring to periods of god's guidance, parallel to *tote men* at 270b7, referring to the current revolution.) We could also take the legend preceding the myth as supporting the view that the present cycle is guided by god. For there it is god who is said to change the course of the sun and the other stars to its present direction (269a1-5), and his turning the universe is a characteristic of those periods of

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terms of forward or reverse, but in terms of cycles in which the world is or is not actively guided by god.

god's intervention in the myth (cf. 269c5, 269e5-270a5). It is also important to recall that according to the legend the god in question is traditionally Zeus,[12] under whom, in turn, we are said to be living in the myth (272b2-3). Further evidence will help to confirm this.

4. Contrary motion to the present: reversal of the ageing process -accompanying reversal in the universe

In fact the text goes on to say that, in the motion contrary to the present one, a lot of changes take place. First, there is destruction of animals (270c11-12), something that will afterwards be described as what immediately follows the release of the universe by god (273a3-4), and which can therefore suggest that the motion we are considering is one of reversal. Secondly, and most importantly, there is the growing younger of the old, until they disappear (270d-e). This reversal of the ageing process is said to accompany (*sunepomenon*) the reversal of the universe (*têi tou pantos aneilixei*), whenever the phase contrary to the one which is now established begins (*hotan hê tês nun kathestêkuias enantia gignêtai tropê*), 270d3-4. It is essential to bear in mind that in the myth the microcosmic events follow the same direction as that of the cosmos, as we can gather from the general rule at 274d6-7 that "we imitate and accompany (*sunepomenoi)* the whole cosmos for all time" (cf. 274a1: all other things "imitate and accompany the state of the universe", and 271b7-8: "generation circles back in the opposite direction to follow the revolution").

5. The reversal of the reversal: the gêgeneis and the (forward) age of Cronus

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[12] Cf. *supra*, n. 6.

We are told that "it is a consequence (*hepomenon*) of the old going to the nature of a child, that from *those who are dead and lying in the earth*, there again people *are constituted and return to life (ek tôn teteleutêkotôn au, keimenôn de en gêi, palin ekei sunistamenous kai anabiôskomenous*), since generation circles back in the opposite direction to follow the revolution" (271b4-8). We can wonder whether the coming to life again from the earth at 271b6-7:

A. takes place within the same period of reversal as 4.;
or
B. represents the start of a new period (namely, the forward age of Cronus, which will be mentioned more explicitly from 271c4 onwards).

A. would imply that during the period of the reversal in which the old grew young, people were born from the earth (*gêgeneis*) as old and again grew young -since generation follows the direction of the revolution, 271b7-8. This interpretation would account for the infix *ana* (back) in the first word of the expression *"sunanakukloumenês* (circles back) *eis tanantia tês geneseôs*" at 271b7-8.[13]

But, if there are *gêgeneis* during this age of reversal, which are born from the earth as old, they should be distinguished from the *gêgeneis* of the age of Cronus, since it is implied at 272e3 that the latter are born from *seeds* (*spermata*), and therefore follow the normal process of growth from young to old, like a plant.

B. would claim that being born from the earth after the growing young of the old constitutes a new cycle both for humans and also for the cosmos -cf. again "the generation

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[13] Of course the *ana* here could also be interpreted to be just relative to the immediately previous cycle, not necessarily indicating a reverse cycle. But, if this is so, it seems to be an unusual case in the myth of Plato using that wording loosely in respect of direction of motion, after having been very careful in the introductory passages (cf. *anapalin ienai* 269d2, *anapalin poreuesthai* 270a6-7, *aneilixis*, 270d3) to use *ana* only to refer to reverse cycles.

circles back in the opposite direction to follow the revolution" (271b7-8). And this process would then correspond directly to the age of Cronus and the *gêgeneis* mentioned there (271c ff. and cf. 272a-b for the connection between *gêgeneis* and the age of Cronus). In this case, there would be no *gêgeneis* before the age of Cronus, and the first *gêgeneis* (born from seeds) would belong to that age.

My reading allows for either interpretation,[14] since I can draw the same conclusion about our present period as a forward one from both:

Under A., *the age of Cronus,* which here would start at 271c8, *would be opposite to the reversal described in the previous lines of text,* since, as we said, in the age of Cronus, the *gêgeneis* grow from young to old, and in the previous reversal, from old to young. And therefore, according to the principle that the microcosm follows the macrocosm (274a, d, mentioned also in this context at 271b7-8), these would represent opposed cycles. So, if the age of Cronus is opposed to the reversal at 4. -because of the opposite directions of ageing-, and if the latter is in turn opposed to the present one (as is stated at 270d3 ff.),[15] then the present one is forward or guided by god.

Under B., *the age of Cronus* would start at 271b4 and therefore all the *gêgeneis* up to this time would be born from young to old and, as such, they *would be opposite to the previous reversal* in which the old grew younger, the latter being in turn opposite to the present revolution

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[14] Though my preference is for interpretation A., according to which the period of reversal needn't be as short as the length of a human life (specifically the length of the oldest human life at the time when the reversion begins) -particularly after the text has emphasized that the reverse cycle takes place *pollas periodôn muriadas,* 270a7- and which could render the use of '*ana*' more consistent, as suggested in note 13 above.

[15] *hê tês nun kathestêkuias enantia... tropê,* d4.

(recall again 270d3-4). So again we infer that we are now in a forward cycle.

So, we can see that under both of these interpretations the age of Cronus in 5. appears as opposed to 4., and then we have another reason for thinking that 3. is true, *i.e. we are living in a forward period, or one guided by god*, since the -forward- age of Cronus is a reversal of the direction of the universe in 4., which is in turn described as opposite to the current phase.

This conclusion has the philological advantage of suiting the reading of all the manuscripts at 271d4 -so that we do not need to amend the text as Burnet does: it is intelligible then to say that in the age of Cronus god took care of the universe *hôs nun*[16] (even though the *epimeleia* he exerts now is different from the one in the age of Cronus, cf. *infra* section 7).

In this ideal age of Cronus, then, both men and all the fruits sprang spontaneously from the earth; there was no need for agriculture; there were no wild animals, no wars, no families or states since all the parts of the universe were under the close care of gods; and there was a warm climate obviating the need for fire (271d-272b). It is in all these ways that the age of Cronus is *hêkista* the current revolution (cf. 271d1); but not in respect of the direction of the revolution.[17]

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[16] Let us notice that, as some scholars have suggested, it may be necessary to restore a connective here -and so read, e.g. *hôs nun {kai} kata* after Hermann, followed by Diès (1935: *ad loc.*); an omission that might be explained by a kind of haplography, given the similarity between *kai* and the first letters of *kata*.

[17] Cf. *peri tou panta automata gignesthai tois anthrôpois* at 271d1, which seems precisely to qualify the scope of the *hêkista* in the same line. We should take in like manner the allusion to the age of Cronus as *enantia* to ours at 274e11, which is made in a context meant to emphasize and contrast the shepherding fulfilled by god at that time and the -more modest- political care carried out by humans in the present epoch.

The Stranger then proceeds to ask which of the two ages was happier, whether that of Cronus or "this [life] which is said to be in the presence of *Zeus* (*epi Dios*),"[18] which is *"the [life] of the present era" (ton nuni)*, 272b1-4. The assertion that we are living under god confirms 3., namely that this period is one of those in which the universe is not just left to itself, and this will again be supported below.

6. Reversal after the age of Cronus: increasing cosmic disorder

Now, we still need to fill in a gap between the ages of Cronus and Zeus, since according to the cosmic structure of opposite cycles presented at 2. there should be a reverse cycle between them. And this reverse cycle seems to be precisely the one depicted at 272d6-273d4. There the Stranger describes what happens at the end of the age of Cronus: "when the time of all these things was finished, and change was due to come about, and moreover all the earthborn race had by that time been consumed, since each soul had given all its births by falling into the earth as seed as many times as had been assigned to each, then *the pilot of the universe so to speak released the tiller and went off to his place of outlook, so that fated and inborn desire turned the universe backwards* (palin anestrephen)" (272d6-e6). This reverse cycle is characterized by initial cosmic convulsion and destruction of animals (273a3-4) -parallel to the destruction of animals occurring at the beginning of the reverse cycle described at 4., cf. 270c11-12; restoration of order for the very briefest period after the release (273a5-7, c5-6),[19] and then increasing cosmic disorder

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[18] *epi* + genitive= in the presence of (or in the time of). Cf. LSJ *ad "epi"*.

[19] Rowe (1995: 13) in fact suggests that the last two circumstances described (respectively the convulsion and the restoration of order) occur in two opposite cycles: the first one would depict the reversal following the golden rule of Cronus and the second would mark the

which results in the danger of the destruction of the universe (273d3-4). There is also in this reverse cycle - as in the one at 4.-, a reversal of the ageing process so that men and other animals grow younger rather than older (see the reference back to this cycle at 273e6-9).[20] But it is when the universe is on the brink of destruction that god intervenes and then we have:

7. Forward cycle: The age of Zeus

We are told that at that very moment "god who had ordered the universe, seeing that it was in trouble, and worried lest, having been storm-tossed and dissolved by confusion, it should sink into the limitless sea of dissimilarity, *sits back again at his tiller*, and after *turning (strepsas)* all that was sick and dissolute in the previous period when the world was by itself, he *puts it in order* (kosmei) *and, setting it right again*

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start of *our new, present cycle*, the "age of Zeus". The latter would, according to Rowe, go in the same direction as the golden period; the difference is that, instead of being ruled by god, the universe would follow the rule of its own intelligence (*phronêsis*). This interpretation postulates then two successive periods when the universe marches by itself (without god) in opposite directions; something, however, that seems precluded by 269e7 ff., which precisely denies, amongst various possibilities, that the universe should turn itself in opposite directions. In addition, Rowe's justification for his postulating not only a reverse, but also a forward cycle without god, namely that if the universe "always went in the reverse direction when left to itself, its claim to rationality [*phronêsis*] would look weak", is unconvincing, since, while it is true that the bodily determines the *direction* of the motion of the universe in the reverse cycle (as he himself notes) - *i.e.* its *anapalin ienai*, 269d2 ff.-, we must also note that the world's intelligence is mentioned there specifically in the context of the cycles which move opposite to those of god's guidance, and its relevance is to explain the *circularity* of its motion (*periagetai zôion on kai phronêsin eilêchos*, 269c9-d2) -at least as far as the beginning of the reverse cycle is concerned, when memory of god's teaching is still fresh (cf. *infra*, ch. 6, n. 2).

[20] In this passage we are told that when the universe was reversed again into its present path of generation (meaning the present age of Zeus), that "produced *new things opposite to the ones before*. For those animals which were due to disappear through smallness grew larger". This means that in the previous period animals were growing younger.

(epanorthôn), *makes it* (apergazetai) *immortal and ageless*" (273d4-e4).[21]

The action of god sitting back again at the tiller suggests the start of a new forward cycle, since his absence from the tiller was characteristic of the opposite period after the age of Cronus (272e4 ff.). This, as we can see, is confirmed by the assertion that god turned round (*strepsas*) all that was sick in the *previous* period (*proterâi periodôi*) that the world underwent by itself (*kath' heauton,* 273e2; cf. *di'heautou* as characterizing the march of the universe in reverse cycles at 270a5). And the text goes on to say that the universe is turned (cf. *strephthentos*) along the road towards its present generation (*tên epi tên nun genesin hodon,* 273e6-7). In addition, god is here said to restore the world's immortality (cf. *athanaton auton kai agêrôn apergazetai,* 273e3-4), something that characterizes god's action in the -forward- period when he guides the universe, as we learn from 270a3-5: "Sometimes the universe is guided by a different, divine cause, acquiring life again and receiving restored immortality (*lambanonta athanasian episkeuastên*) from its creator; at other times it is let go".

Which is this god in this new era? It should be Zeus, the one in the presence of which we are now (cf. *epi Dios, ton nuni* at 272b2-3). So we should read the passage that follows (273e-274e) as continuous with this one and within the age of Zeus. The whole idea this passage seems to convey is that the present era of Zeus, by contrast with the earlier era of Cronus, is not characterized by

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[21] On Rowe's interpretation, this passage marks the beginning of a new age of Cronus, which he takes as following directly our present period as one of god's absence, both these periods, however, having the same -forward- direction. (Cf. Rowe [1995: 13, 197 *ad* 274c1-2].) But this description does not sit well with the overall structure of cosmic cycles presented in the myth, according to which periods of god's guidance are always in the opposite direction to periods of god's absence (cf. *supra,* section 2.2).

such a great divine care that would prevent the existence of politics and human beings being their own rulers. As we shall see shortly, Plato seems to be willing to suggest here that politics takes place neither in an ideal universe where god's *nous* would have that kind of power, nor in its opposite under the predominance of *anankê*,[22] but in our *actual* world where *nous* and *anankê* coexist. Perhaps that is why in this era there are wild beasts, the weather is cold enough that man requires fire (274b-c), and so on.[23] As Brisson has proposed, we can think of this era as a *synthesis* between the ideal order of the age of Cronus and the disorder that is depicted as prevailing in the reverse cycles,[24] in the same manner as in the *Timaeus* our actual world is said to be a synthesis of *nous* and *anankê*. But, just as in the *Timaeus Nous* still rules over *anankê* and prevails within the composition of the *kosmos* (47e-48a), here again we should think that god rules, since he is still at the helm of the universe (273e1), and exercises guidance (*agôgê*, 274b1). He also gives orders to the universe (cf. *prostattein* at 274a5 and a7), even though the universe is ordered to be independent (274a5). This suggests an active role for god and not just a passive one as in those reverse periods when he withdraws his hand from the helm and limits himself, at the very most, to "observing" what is happening from his place of outlook (272e). The same active role of the deity is suggested by the allusion to the *gifts* of the gods (such as fire, skills and seeds) at 274c5-d2, who come and help the defenceless

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[22] For *anankê* cf. *infra*, ch. 6, n. 14.

[23] Note however that these are just *terrestrial* disorders -in the same way as *anankê* manifests itself mainly in the *Timaeus* at a terrestrial level (cf. *supra*, ch. 2, n. 47)-, which can be subsumed in the overall *agôgê* that I shall mention. There is here no suggestion of the astronomical disorder that characterizes the periods without guidance of god, and which would mean the *governance* of the bodily or of *anankê* over the whole universe (*Pol.* 273c-d). The latter -though not the former- seems incompatible with intelligent design, as we can see from the *Philebus* (28d-e), *Timaeus* (46c-e, 47e-48a) and *Laws* (X 888e ff. with 891c-892a, XII 966e-967a; cf. *infra*, ch. 7 section 1).

[24] Cf. Brisson (1974: 490-2).

condition of man, giving the necessary "teaching and education" (*didachês kai paideuseôs*, 274c6-7),[25] in a way that is not so close to royal shepherding, but still provident enough and is far from the passive role of god in the reversions. God is then present even though we are said to be deprived of the guidance of the particular gods who used to tend us in different parts of the universe (274b5-6 and d3-4, cf. 271d-e),[26] something that is however crucial to allow for politics in the sense of men guiding themselves.

We see then that the structure of the forward cycles is not repetitive. The age of Cronus depicts an ideal situation which contrasts with the real one. And it is important that these two ages, while both being ages of god, should have different characteristics in the context of the whole dialogue, since in the light of them Plato will criticize the first definition of the statesman given before the myth -*i.e.* shepherd as breeder of human bipeds or the human flock-[27] (a characterization which rather belonged to god in the apolitical era of Cronus),[28] and put forward a new one in the light of the myth - statesmanship in terms of human concern, the latter being more adjusted to the facts (cf. 274e-275a, 276c-d).

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[25] Cf. the previous suggestion that god gives *didachê* during the forward cycles at 273b2, which the world is said to remember at the beginning of a reverse cycle. Rowe (1995: 197 *ad* 274c6) admits that "it is surprising to find gods giving gifts to us human beings" in a period when according to him we are not under god. On my interpetation, that there *is* a divine presence in this period, the giving of such gifts is no longer surprising.

[26] Note that it is the care of *these* gods that men seem to be explicitly said to be deprived of. Cf. the plural *theôn* at 274d3 and *nemontos hêmas daimonos* at 274b5-6, which must be a reference to each of the *daimones* who *enemen* [us as] a particular kind of flock at 271d6-e1.

[27] Cf. 267d, where politics is a *nomeutikê* or *koinotrophikê* concerned with the human *agelê*.

[28] Cf. particularly 271d6-e1, where the *zôia* are divided by *flocks* among gods who tended them, and the allusion to people under Cronus as his *trophimoi* at 272b8.

8. Some further details about the age of Zeus

At 273e6 ff. we are told further details about what happened "when the universe was turned along the road towards its present generation" (*strephthentos tou kosmou tên epi tên nun genesin hodon*), namely, "the ageing process again stopped, and produced new things opposite to the ones before. *For those animals which were almost due to disappear through smallness grew larger, and those bodies newly born from the earth with grey hair again died and descended to the earth*" (e7-11). In this latter sentence the new things of this cycle are contraposed to those happening before: the normal present process of growth is contrasted with the previous growing smaller and disappearing; as to the second clause, the text cannot mean that the *gêgeneis* belong to this period (for that is ruled out at 274a2-4), but they must belong to the previous age, following on the above mentioned contraposition.

Are these latter *gêgeneis* those of the age of Cronus, so that in fact our present age of Zeus has not been separated from the age of Cronus by a reverse cycle but is itself the reverse cycle following the age of Cronus? Apart from the separate evidence we have given against this,[29] it could hardly here be so, for in the age of Cronus the ageing process of the *gêgeneis* goes from young to old -as we have seen from the image of the seed-, and so does the ageing process in the age of Zeus (cf. 273e8-9, 274a -with the reference to conception, birth and nurture), so that the direction of the age of Zeus could not be contraposed to that of the age of Cronus. It makes rather more sense to interpret that the *gêgeneis* of the

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[29] Note also that the text refers to the reverse cycle following the age of Cronus as completely in the past, as we learn from the remark that, with regard to the universe's remembering the teachings of its father, "at the beginning it did so more accurately, towards the end more dimly" (*kat' archas men oun akribesteron apetelei, teleutôn de ambluteron*, 273b2-3).

cycle immediately preceding this one are not those of the age of Cronus, but belong to an intervening reverse period between the ages of Cronus and Zeus in which people are born from the earth as old. In this way I think we must read 273e10-11 (*ta d' ek gês neogenê sômata polia phunta palin apothnêiskonta eis gên katêiei*): "those bodies newly born from the earth with grey hair again died and descended to the earth".[30] Being "born from the earth with grey hair", *i.e.* old, is contrary to being born from the earth from "seed" (cf. *spermata*, 272e3), which would suggest a normal process of growth from young to old, like a plant. If this is so, then we have *gêgeneis* not only in the forward age of Cronus but also -of a different kind- in the following reversal.[31] [32]

III. THE APPENDIX OF THE MYTH AND THE CASE AGAINST

I have above attempted to present a coherent reading of the text according to which we could make sense of its referring to the present era as that of Zeus, implying that we are living under a period of god. In addition, a reading of the appendix of the myth (273e6-274e1) has

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[30] Plato has not invented this device of people being born with grey hair, since it is to be found in Hesiod, *Op.* 181, where it is said that the race of iron will be destroyed when men are born with grey hair.

[31] This would also be no surprise for one who adopted interpretation A. at section 5., in which we saw a similar kind of *gêgeneis* in a similarly regressive cycle at 4., which must be the cycle preceding the age of Cronus. Brisson (1992b), for his part, has suggested that this could equally well refer to the cycle preceding our age -so that there might be no reverse preceding the age of Cronus-, since in both cases the direction is the same. However, there is an important textual clue that would make the two reverse cycles distinct, namely the *allên* applied to destruction of animals at 273a3, which would suggest that the latter is different from the one at 270c11-12. The two passages should therefore correspond to different cosmic reverse periods.

[32] In the light of this, we can give an explanation of the passage 271a7-b1, where we are told that the *gêgeneis* "were remembered by our first ancestors, who were neighbours to the end of the previous cycle during the succeeding time". The *gêgeneis* which are recalled here by our ancestors need not be those of the age of Cronus but could be those of our immediately previous -reverse- cycle.

been given that could fit into that picture. However, it is at this last stage of the text that the ambiguity becomes greater and therefore an alternative reading possible.

To say that in the present cycle we are deprived of the care of the regional gods, but not of the overall care exerted by god in the universe, can in principle make sense of the greater part of the text of the myth, 269c-273e, and the actual suggestions of god's care in our era. However, the appendix can also be seen to contain some counterevidence for this kind of interpretation. Let us quote the most challenging text in that direction:

"And everything that contributed to human life arose from those things, once the care of the gods, as has now been said, left men, and they had to lead their own existence and take care of themselves by themselves (*di' heautôn*), like the whole cosmos (*kathaper holos ho kosmos*), which we imitate and follow for the whole time..." (274d2-7).

If we follow strictly the macro-microcosm parallelism that has been stressed throughout the myth, it would be hard to say that only men are deprived of their caring gods but not the universe; the text just quoted rather suggests the contrary. Even if one interprets that the *kathaper holos ho kosmos* refers to an analogy between human beings and the cosmos only in respect of the care of themselves that they have to have, not to their being left by the gods,[33] one could nonetheless expect the paralellism to have a wider scope than that and suggest that, if the care of the gods left men, it should also have left the universe. But after all it is not said that the gods withdraw every sort of care, not even for human

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[33] After all even at 273c2-3, referring to a forward cycle, it is the universe *itself* which breeds the *zôia, with the assistance* of the pilot; though still the *epimeleia* that the universe has to have of itself at 274d5 could be reminiscent of the *epimeleia kai kratos* that the universe has of itself at the beginning of the reverse cycle at 273a7.

beings, but only that of each of the gods *nemontos hêmas* (274b5) during the age of Cronus (cf. 271d6-e1). The gods are still present as bestowers of gifts like the *technai* to humanity, which are granted together with the "necessary teaching and education" (*met' anankaias didachês kai paideuseôs*, 274c6-7).[34] *Didachê* was exactly the kind of thing given by god in the periods when he guides the universe and which the latter has to remember when left to its own (cf. 273b2). So, if the gods are still present, though more detachedly, in the present era by giving us gifts, teaching and education oriented towards facilitating a more independent life on the part of human beings, so one could expect god to be in charge of the universe with a similar function. It would then make as much sense in the latter as in the former case to find the text saying that:

"In the same way as the cosmos had been ordered to be the master of its own march (*kathaper tôi kosmôi prosetetakto autokratora einai tês hautou poreias*), so and similarly were the parts ordered to conceive, procreate and breed by themselves so far as it was possible, by similar guidance." (274a4-b1).

We find a similar situation in the *Timaeus* when the Demiurge instructs (again, the verb *prostattein*, 36d4-7) the heavens how to move; this seems to be what the heavenly bodies learn (38e6) and they continue doing so even after, according to the mythical literal picture, the Demiurge ceases his direct work on the universe and the World-Soul and the heavenly bodies have to take up ruling functions in the universe (41a ff., 42d-e; cf.

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[34] This is an important point, since nothing in the structure of the reverse cycles seems to leave room for gods to come back and actively give teaching to the universe or its parts (e.g. human beings), as they are said to do at 274c5-d2. On the contrary, it is stated that, no god being at the helm of the universe, there are no longer lesser gods having intervention (272e ff.), so that, if we find the latter - as we do- in our epoch, the former should also be present.

34c4-5), in a way that shows the orderly foundations of the latter to end up being much more internal to the universe than the external figure of the Demiurge initially suggested.

We see, then, that the appendix to the myth of the *Politicus* could be taken as suggesting two sides of the question, with hints, on the one hand, reminiscent of the regressive cycles and with some others which, on the other hand, support the contrary situation. And perhaps this apparent tension can be resolved if, as suggested above, one interprets the present cycle not as repetitive of the age of Cronus but as an actual synthesis of the rule of *nous* and a state of the world merely left to itself, as much as in the *Timaeus* the world is a *sustasis* of *ta dia nou dedêmiourgêmena* and *ta di'anankês gignomena* (47e-48a).

IV. CONCLUSION

In sum, by following the movement of the text, I hope to have shown a coherent reading of the letter of the myth of the *Politicus* according to which the present cycle in which we are living is an orderly one under the care of god and not one of increasing cosmic disorder, as has usually been assumed at the cost of charging Plato with unsolvable contradictions. Our present cycle proved parallel and not opposite to that of Cronus in respect of direction, even though some differences can be found in other senses and are indeed required for Plato to be able to make his political point by means of the myth at all. In this way I hope to have established that, even on a literal reading of the text, the Mind of god must still be presupposed to be the foundation of the present cosmic order, and in this respect the *Politicus* picture does not conflict with similar claims in other dialogues.

CHAPTER 6

COSMIC AND HUMAN DRAMA IN THE *POLITICUS*[1]

We have already seen in the previous chapter how, in the picture of opposite cycles presented in the myth of the *Politicus*, the contraposition between the era of Cronus and that of Zeus is relevant for the political purposes of the myth, which, as the Stranger states, aims at correcting the first definition of the statesman. Now, apart from that, we can wonder how literally the myth should be taken, and whether it does not still deserve other levels of analysis which could complemetarily enrich and enlighten its function in the dialogue. It is *prima facie* clear that the guise of the myth is cosmological, but how much cosmological significance does it have? Positions on this point have often been extreme, and so the myth has sometimes been treated either as a digressive and separate piece of cosmological doctrine, or as a rather lengthy tale fashioned for the political purposes of the dialogue but deprived of great cosmological importance. In this chapter, on the contrary, I wish to undertake a more integrated analysis, by stressing the cosmological content of the myth and, against that background, exploring further its ethical and political implications. In this way I attempt to show the intimate connection of cosmology with anthropology and politics in the myth, so that, far from being a digression, this story turns out to be crucial for an understanding of the general political purpose of the dialogue. I shall argue for the thesis that: (I) despite the mythical device of creation and cosmic cycles, any allusion to disorder or cosmic drama in the whole universe should not be taken literally (though we shall

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[1] This chapter is based on a preliminary version read at the Third Symposium Platonicum, Bristol, August 1992 and subsequently published in *Polis* 12 (1993), 99-121, with the title: "Cosmic and Human Drama in Plato's *Statesman*".

see that the myth does contain some important cosmological elements); but (II) these stand for human and social disturbances; in other words, it is mainly in human affairs that confusion and ethical disorder arise.

I. THE COSMOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MYTH

1. The implausibility of a literal interpretation of cosmic drama

Let us start by summarizing the picture of opposite cosmic cycles that we saw in more detail in the previous chapter. God is described as the creator of the universe, and there are times when he himself guides the world and makes it go in a forward revolution. But at some other times god lets the universe go and it turns backwards. This rotation in reverse starts by being regular, thanks to the world's *phronêsis* and remembrance of god's instructions. But, as time passes and memory grows dim, the influence of the corporeal element of the world's constitution becomes greater and the motion of the universe becomes therefore increasingly disorderly, to such an extent that god has to come back to restore order (cf. 269c-d, 272e ff.).

This picture, if taken literally, would suggest the idea of cosmic drama, which we can take as a conflict between good and evil, or their respective causes -*i.e.* intelligence and the corporeal- which not only coexist but seem also to prevail alternatingly in the whole universe, making it exhibit either purposive or random behaviour.[2] However, I do not think that this picture of

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[2] For the bodily as a cause of evil, in turn understood in terms of disorder, cf. 273b4-d4. Such disorder does not lie in design but in its absence, e.g. in illness or ignorance -caused by the bodily-, as is the case when the world becomes "forgetful" of god's instructions and full of "diseases" (273c6, e2). Cf. *Prot.* 358c6-7, *Gorg.* 480b1, 488a2-4, 509e5-7, *Rep.* I 351a5, *Soph.* 228b8-9, c7-8, e1-5, *Tim.* 86b-

opposite cosmic cycles of order and increasing disorder should be taken literally.

We must be sensitive to the way the Eleatic Stranger introduces the story to Young Socrates: it is a *paidia* (268d8), a "game for children"; he invites Young Socrates to listen to the story "like chidren, for you are certainly not many years removed from children's games" (268e5-6). It seems, then, that in this manner of presenting the myth, Plato is presumably not intending his readers to believe his story uncritically. His playful tone, on the other hand, contrasts with the serious tone of the *Timaeus*,[3] where the narrator stresses the difficulty of finding the maker of the All (28c) and prays for the help of the gods in his big undertaking

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e, *Phil.* 22b, *Laws* V 731c, IX 860d for evil lying in absence of intention, ignorance, or illness.

At *Pol.* 273b-e we can also see how the bodily rules in the reverse cycles. In fact, *to sômatoeides* -which participates in great *ataxia* before the *kosmos* is established- is inherent to the universe's "ancient nature" (*to tês palai pote phuseôs suntrophon*, 273b4-5), also called "the state of ancient disharmony" (*to tês palaias anarmostias pathos*, 273c7-d1). And we can see that, as memory of god grows dimmer, this state of disharmony "increasingly even rules (*mallon kai dunasteuei*)", and towards the end of the cycle "is flourishing" (*exanthei*) (273c7-d1). We must notice also that this process starts early in the cycle, since the text suggests that the period in which the world's memory is accurate and everything runs *kallista* is very short indeed (cf. 273c5-6). And even if, for that very short period, the memory of the world can be said to rule, the bodily condition of the universe is still responsible for its innate (*emphuton*) tendency to move in a reverse direction (*to anapalin ienai*, 269d-e; cf. *epithumia* at 272e6), even though the reverse cycle starts by being circular due to the world's *phronêsis* (*periagetai zôion on kai phronêsin eilêchos*, 269c7-d2). Now, since the bodily is in itself full of *ataxia*, the fundamental tendency of the reverse cycle is towards disorder. And, as we have just seen, towards the end of the cycle this disorder caused by the bodily prevails to such an extent that the universe is on the verge of destruction (cf. *diaphthoras kindunon*, 273d3). So even any rule exerted by the world's memory seems very precarious in comparison with the underlying force exerted by the corporeal.

[3] Note that, when at *Tim.* 59c7-d2 Timaeus refers to his own engagement with generated realities as a *paidia*, he stresses however that this *paidia* is "moderate" (*metrion*) and "sober" (*phronimon*). For the serious tone of the *Timaeus* in general cf. Lloyd (1968: 81-4). See also the claims of truth that Timaeus makes for his discourse at *Tim.* 30b8, 38a1, 56b4.

(27b-d, 48d-e).[4] Even if the *Timaeus* picture is, on different grounds, not to be taken literally in all its details either, it seems that in that *eikos logos* of the *Timaeus* Plato is engaging in a more serious enterprise than when "raising" in the *Politicus* a big mass of *muthos* (277b4-5) to illustrate the king.

This being so, and given the mythical character of the story, we are entitled to think that, if the picture of cosmic reversals does not appear in any other context, and furthermore it is contradicted in more argumentative passages, then we have a *prima facie* reason for not taking it literally. Successive complete cosmic reversals, in fact, do not appear elsewhere,[5] even less the fact that they end in *ataxia*. Furthermore, there seem to be positive reasons to reject the idea that Plato could have believed in them, and we could pose the question in the context of how Plato himself seems to understand astronomy in discursive passages. In the *Republic*, for example, astronomy is conceived of as a strict intellectual discipline, and, despite the sensible aspect of the heavens which makes them fall short of the absolute stability of intelligible entities,[6] Plato

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[4] This fact becomes all the more suggestive when we note that, unlike the *Politicus*, invocation to the gods in support of the theories expounded is present not only in the *Timaeus* but also in *Philebus* (25b) and *Laws* X (893b), *i.e.* in the three major pieces of cosmological theory that we find in the late dialogues apart from the *Politicus*.

[5] Neither in the *Republic* (X, 616b-617d), nor in the *Timaeus* myth, nor in the *Laws* (VII 822a-b), even though all these passages deal with astronomy either discursively or mythically, and even though reverse -or at least opposite- direction is mentioned e.g. in the *Timaeus* as a characteristic of the planets moving in the Circle of the Other which, however, revolves simultaneously with and is embraced by the Circle of the Same (cf. 36c-d, 39a-b).

[6] The *parallattein* predicated of the heavenly bodies (*i.e. ta en autôi [=ouranôi]*, 530a6-7, the referent of *tauta* at 530b2) doesn't suggest in itself anything like the picture of deterioration of the heavenly motion that we find at the end of the *Politicus* myth, but it must be taken in its context: it would be absurd to think that "these things turn out to be always in the same state (*aei hôsautôs*) and do not vary at all with respect to anything" (*oudamêi ouden parallattein*), 530b2-3. Note the qualifications *oudamêi ouden*: it is rather expectable that sensible things as such should be subject to

nevertheless stresses that the heavens are "the most beautiful and accurate" of sensible things (529c8-d1, cf. 530a3-7) and must be used as an example (*paradeigma*, cf. 529d7) in understanding the intelligible proportions that govern the movement of the heavenly bodies. As Mourelatos has put it, "in the heavens we have the best visible concrete realization" of the abstract object of its corresponding science.[7] These heavenly bodies, however, could hardly serve as an example if their motions were liable to become disorderly in the radical way that the *Politicus* myth proposes,[8] nor would the fatal evils that end up prevailing in the universe during the reverse cycles in the *Politicus* befit Plato's appraisal of its extreme beauty and accuracy in the *Republic*. The *Laws*, for its part, stresses that the heavenly bodies follow *always* the same circular track (VII, 822a7), and treats as impiety the contrary belief (821c-d).[9] Let us recall in

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change at least in some respect, the whole point of the propaedeutic sciences being to elevate the soul from *genesis* to *ousia*. The word *parallattein* reappears in the *Politicus* (269e), but it conveys in itself no connotation of deterioration: conversely, it is said to belong to retrogradation (*anakuklêsis*) as the least possible *parallaxis* of the world's motion; the motion would still be circular, stable and along the same path (cf. *hoti malista en tôi autôi kata tauta mian phoran kineitai*). If *parallaxis* can be thought of as retrogradation, as the *Politicus* evinces, note that the *Timaeus* also predicates retrogradation (*epanakuklêsis*, 40c5) of the heavenly bodies (cf. even *parallaxis* at 22d1); though it will happen within the same *periphora* and not in different cycles as the *Politicus* proposes (cf. n. 5 and Knorr [1990: 315]).

[7] Cf. Mourelatos (1981: 29).

[8] That disorder ends up affecting the whole heaven is suggested at *Pol.* 273a ff. At 273a1-3 the text mentions a *seismos* in the cosmos as an immediate result of god's release of the helm; after that calm and order briefly follow but at 273c we are told about the *chalepa kai adika* occurring in the heaven or universe (*en ouranôi*, c1, which cannot just mean the earth) which "it itself possesses and communicates to the *zôia* [within it]" (c2). These disorders increase as time passes, so that in the end the *ouranos*, "mixing together small goods with a great mixture of the opposite things, reaches danger of destruction of itself and of the things within it" (273d1-4), so that we do not reach complete chaos but get very near to it at the time of god's intervention. All this, however, is incompatible with continuing astronomical order.

[9] This would in turn be consistent with the astronomical picture in the *Timaeus*, which presents the circular routes of the Same and the Other as the only ones traversed by the heavenly bodies, however complex the movements of some of them may be. Remember also that the

this context that both in the *Republic* -VI 508a4- and the *Laws* -VII 821b6, 821c7- the heavenly bodies are regarded as gods,[10] and that, according to the *Republic* -II 381b-c- any change of the gods to the worse would be viewed as contradictory to their goodness. So it seems clear, from the discursive treatment that astronomy receives in dialogues other than the *Politicus*, that Plato regards the sensible astronomical system as continuously orderly.[11] And, if there is consensus in situating the *Politicus* between the *Republic* and the *Laws*, it would seem unreasonable to suppose that Plato temporarily changes his mind by allowing the movement of the stars to pass from order into almost complete disorder in a dialogue where, furthermore, no discursive ground can be found for such a claim.[12]

Discursive evidence, then, seems not only to be silent about opposite cosmic cycles in the fashion of the *Politicus* but also to go against its postulation. We must also bear in mind that, in the rest of the *corpus*, where

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Timaeus myth starts and ends with an exaltation of the sensible universe as the most beautiful of sensible things (29a5, 92c6-9) as had already been done in the astronomical passage in the *Republic*.

[10] See also the reference to the universe and heavenly bodies as gods in the *Timaeus* in ch. 3, section 1 (for the universe as god in the *Laws* cf. *infra*, ch. 7, section 4.2). It is revealing, by contrast with these other dialogues, that the universe and the heavenly bodies are *not* called gods in the *Politicus*. Plato seems to be consistent in his reasons for not doing so, if on a literal picture the world can here exhibit behaviour that is other than intelligent and good.

[11] This point I think can be maintained regardless of whatever difference in detail can be found in Plato's treatment of astronomy in *Republic* and *Timaeus* and *Laws*. For discussion of this issue - particularly as far as the role of observation is concerned- see e.g. Heath (1913: 139-40), Shorey (1935: 186), Dicks (1970: 106), Vlastos (1980: 1-16), Mourelatos (1980: 33 ff.), (1981: 16-7, 24 ff.), Kung (1985: 23), Lloyd (1991: 333-4, 348).

[12] Note also that Heath (1913) does not even mention the *Politicus* in his detailed consideration of Plato's astronomical views in the dialogues, whereas Dicks (1970: 115), in his very brief allusion to the *Politicus* myth, stresses that it "adds little to our knowledge of Plato's astronomy" and is "highly fanciful". Nor do we find any consideration of the *Politicus* passage in the analytic studies on Plato's astronomy compiled in Anton (1980). I shall be suggesting below, however, that, astronomical details aside, the cosmology of the *Politicus* reveals itself as more than sheer fancy.

cyclical events are mentioned at all, they are not referred to the whole universe but just restricted to Earth -in the form, e.g., of fires, deluges and catastrophes sometimes or periodically affecting Nature and destroying civilization, particularly in Plato's later work; cf. *Tim.* 22a ff., *Crit.* 109d ff., *Laws* III 677a ff.-, and even so, they appear mainly in legendary or narrative contexts. So, even if Plato is elsewhere thinking of cosmic cycles, it would be within those restrictions, *i.e.* within our mortal domain, where that residue of *anankê* not completely controlled by *nous* seems to manifest its effects the most in the *Timaeus*.[13] But these potential disruptions in Nature could never compete against the more comprehensive order, so that in any case it is *nous* that reigns over the universe on the whole (cf. e.g. *Tim.* 48a, *Laws* X 903b, 904b).

2. The philosophical meaning and status of god

On this basis I do not think that the "cosmic drama" in the *Politicus*, or the opposition between directions of the universe determined respectively by *nous* and *to sômatoeides*, should be taken literally as serious cosmological doctrine. This, however, does not mean that the *Politicus* myth lacks elements of cosmological importance. On the contrary, we can find here notions which prove to be the subject of more detailed or argumentative analysis in other late dialogues. Thus, e.g., the universe is conceived of as a *zôion*, with a body and an intelligence of its own (*Pol.* 269d1, cf. *Tim.* 30b4-5, *Phil.* 29e-30a). In addition, god appears as a "divine cause" (*theia aitia*, 270a3) that accounts for whatever order, goodness and beauty exist in the universe (cf. 273b-c, e3), whereas "the bodily" (*to sômatoeides*, 273b4; analogous with *anankê* in the *Timaeus*, also

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[13] Cf. *supra*, ch. 2, n. 47.

mentioned at *Pol.* 269d3, 270c11)[14] is the *aition* of its potential or actual disarrangements (*Pol.* 273b-d, esp. 273b4; cf. *Tim.* 46e5-6). And this opposition between two kinds of causes reminds us of the parallel distinction between divine and necessary causes that we analysed in the *Timaeus* (46c-e, 68e-69a).

Now, if we focus more closely on the nature of god, we shall find that he is mythically presented as a *dêmiourgos* (270a5, 273b1, as in the imagery of the *Timaeus*), and Plato resorts to tradition when making him (as we saw in the previous chapter), bear in different cosmic cycles the respective names of Cronus and Zeus. But in reality this distinction is not sharp: Cronus is called *dêmiourgos kai patêr* at 273b1-2 and Zeus *theos ho kosmêsas [ton kosmon]* at 273d4, and these expressions appear to refer to the same entity. It would then seem that god does not have a distinct personality,[15] despite his mythical disguises, though the main feature that prevails in him even when deprived of these is his function of being a "divine cause", something that also characterizes god in the *Timaeus* (29a, 46c-e, 68e), *Philebus* (where he is also traditionally called Zeus, 30c-d) and *Laws* (X 899b).

According to the mythical picture, we have seen god performing two functions: First, he is the creator of the

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[14] Cf. reverse motion as something *ex anankês* at 269d2-3 and aftwerwards referred to the bodily at 269d9 ff. and 272e ff. (esp. 273b4-5). In addition, "the bodily" in the *Politicus* is analogous to *anankê* in the *Timaeus* insofar as the latter is related to the opposite properties or *ichnê* of the four primary bodies (*Tim.* 48a-b, cf. 52d-53b). Both of them, if uncontrolled by *nous* and not unified in a *kosmos*, are the cause of merely random effects, threatening to sink the world in "the limitless sea of dissimilarity" (*Pol.* 273d-e, cf. *Tim.* 46e; Cornford [1937: 202 ff]). Note in this respect the association between *apeiron*, division and dissimilarity at *Pol.* 273d6 -and *anarmostia* at 273c7- and *apeiron* as conveying division and discord between opposites in the *Philebus* (as suggested at 25e1, 27d9 and analysed *supra*, ch. 4, section 5.4).

[15] Let us also bear in mind that god appears not only as one, but as one-and-many (since he is accompanied by lesser gods, cf. *Pol.* 271d, 272e).

world as an ordered whole (*gennêsas*, 269d9; cf. *sunarmosas* 269d1, *suntheis* 273b7, *kosmêsas* 273d4); though this creation of order seems to occur not only once but in a sense periodically, since god is also the restorer of order under threat of chaos (cf. 273d-e, esp. *kosmei* at 273e3). Secondly, and above all, god is also a ruler or leader who takes care of the universe during its orderly periods (cf. 269c5, 270a3, 271d-e, 272e4, 273c3).[16] But if, as I have argued, it makes more sense to think of no periodical creation or restoration of cosmic order in time, but of a continuously fair and orderly universe, it would seem that, by being the cause of that order, god should be creating and sustaining the world -by his care of it- always and not just periodically (since, as the *Politicus* myth shows, his merely periodical presence does not suffice to guarantee constant order). These two features: being a principle of order and ruling over it, would be characteristic of the "divine cause" represented by god in the *Politicus*, as much as they reappear as distinctive of god and/or the cause not only in the *Timaeus*, but also in the *Philebus* (27a-b) and the *Laws* (e.g. X 896a-c).

Furthermore, there seems to be good reason to suppose that in the *Politicus* myth god is a *nous*. The text in fact attributes intellectual activities to god (*gnontes*, 272e8, and imparting *didachê* at 274c6), and practical functions of ruling, like the tending of flocks, that have already been treated previously in the dialogue as a kind of *epistêmê* (cf. 267a-b). In addition, there are several hints that support this notion in the light of other dialogues since, firstly, god is called a *kubernêtês* (*Pol*. 272e4), and this is the very word Plato uses in the *Phaedrus* to speak of intellect as the pilot

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16 In other words, god in the mythical picture has not only a "cosmogonic" or generating role but also a "cosmonomic" or organizing one -to put it in the terminology of Verdenius (1954: 251). In the *Politicus* the latter seems more emphasized than the former, which is in turn much more detailed in the *Timaeus*. Cf. Brisson (1974: 35-54).

of soul (247c7). Secondly, in the *Politicus* god exhibits the essential feature of "turning itself always" (*auto heauto strephein aei*, 269e5)[17] and this feature is twofold, since it involves (i) circular motion and (ii) self-motion. On the one hand, we know from the *Timaeus* (34a) and *Laws* (X 897c, 898a) that circular motion is the property of *nous*. On the other hand, we learn from the *Phaedrus* (245c-e) and *Laws* (895e-896a) that self-motion is the definition of soul. This suggests that the god or Demiurge in the *Politicus* is a kind of *noetic soul*. This conclusion seems independent of whether we take this *nous* as separate or not from the universe,[18] though, to be utterly consistent, we should rule out the former interpretation, since the text makes it clear that there cannot be constant order in the universe if it is separated (*chôrizomenos*) from god (*Pol.* 273c-d); so that when there is divine guidance -as I have argued to be always the case- god is not separated. At any rate, we are able to say that god, as *nous*, is a mediator in the ontological structure of the *Politicus*: He is both inferior to the immutable Ideas, which are "the most divine of all things" (*tois pantôn theiotatois, Pol.* 269d6) -with which he would nevertheless share invisibility and intelligibility-[19] and superior to the

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[17] This very feature of motion prevents us from taking god as a symbol of the Ideas, which, on the contrary, are immutable and superior even to god's *nous*. The passage referring to the Ideas is 269d5-6: *to kata tauta kai hôsautôs echein aei kai tauton einai tois pantôn theiotatois prosêkei monois*, by contrast with change (*metabolê*, 269e1) pertaining to the universe by virtue of its participation in body (cf. *infra*, note 36). For a characterization of the Ideas in similar terms to those of the *Politicus* see *Phaedo* 78c6, d2-3 (in contrast with *metabolê* at d4), *Tim.* 29a1, *Phil.* 59c4. For discussion about whether the Forms are present in passages of the *Politicus* other than the myth cf. e.g. Guthrie (1978: 176-80) and Mohr (1977) *versus* Owen (1973); Rowe (1995: 4-8) *versus* Skemp (1952: 72-7).

[18] In favour of an interpretation of god as non-transcendent in the *Politicus*, cf. Cornford (1937: 206 ff.); Festugière (1947: 20-1, 43-4), (1949: 104-5, 120 ff., 145); Ostenfeld (1982: 236). Against, cf. T.M. Robinson (1967: 61); (1970: 134); Brisson (1974: 83-4, 479 ff.); Mohr (1982: 42-3, 45-7).

[19] These are features of every soul as such. Cf. *Tim.* 46d6, *Laws* X 898d9-e2. The invisibility of soul is also asserted in *Phaedo* 79b12-15.

material realm he organizes -with which he shares the property of motion (*Pol.* 269d-e). And this mediating function may have a teleological aspect if we take this *nous* to have a cognitive relation to the Ideas (as in the *Timaeus*) and, as a self-mover, to be in turn an efficient cause or principle of motion (as suggested by *Pol.* 269e5-6)[20] and thus act upon the sensible realm according to the order of Ideas. In this way we could explain how he is responsible for bringing beauty to the sensible universe (273b6-7).[21]

3. The cosmological meaning of opposite cycles

So we see that there are elements of cosmological importance in the myth of the *Politicus* which relate it to other late dialogues dealing with cosmology, even though, as I have argued earlier, the imagery itself of opposite cosmic cycles or cosmic drama seems to be unfeasible. Let us recall, however, that by denying the existence of cosmic drama in the *Politicus* I am not denying the existence of all sorts of disturbance in Plato's universe. I am just questioning that disorder might affect *the whole heaven* or universe. However, it is a matter of fact that confusion exists in human and political life -as we shall see further on-, and there may also be disarrangements in the natural domain, even within the framework of an orderly universe. The very myth of the *Politicus* tells us that *there are* "small evils" *(smikra phlaura)* -due to the influence of the primordial condition of the universe, in turn related to its corporeal element- coexisting with "great goods" (*megala agatha*) even under the guidance of god (273b-c, esp. 273c2-4).

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[20] We are there told of god that "to turn itself always is hardly possible except for the one who leads all things that are in turn moved" (*tôi tôn kinoumenôn au pantôn hêgoumenôi*).
[21] Cf. the relation between *metron*, beauty and goodness at *Pol.* 284b1-2.

So, rather than having a successive opposition between prevailing good and evil, or their respective causes, we could think, with some interpreters,[22] that the *Politicus* mythically represents in a separate and abstract way the predominance of two factors (namely, *nous* and the corporeal) which in fact *coexist* in the cosmos as a *sunkrasis* of them (*Pol.* 273b4; cf. *Tim.* 48a2); a *sunkrasis* in which Mind prevails over the cussed corporeal element. The coexistence of these two factors is made explicit, for example, at 273b6-c2: "From its constructor [the universe] has acquired all good things; but from its previous state it itself possesses ... whatever miseries and injustices arise in the universe" (cf. also *Pol.* 269d8-e1: The universe has shared in many blessed things from its begetter, but it also participates in body). In addition, I can also here agree with the suggestion[23] that disorderly cycles in the *Politicus* -as much as the precosmic chaos in the *Timaeus*- are just hypothetical postulations, showing how the world would be *if* god were not present in it *at all times*, or -in the words of the *Timaeus*- if *anankê* were completely left to itself without the direction of *nous*.

What has been said in the previous paragraph can then be taken as the *prima facie* cosmological meaning of the myth of opposite cosmic cycles, which can count as a first possible interpretation of that kind of imagery. However, I think that this interpretation, though correct as far as it goes, does not exhaust the purpose of the myth.[24] So

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[22] Cf. Cornford (1937: 207); Brisson (1974: 490-2). This kind of interpretation had already been offered by Proclus (*In Tim.* III 273, 25 ff. Diehl).

[23] Cf. Cherniss (1954: 29 n. 44); Festugière (1949: 129-30); and those mentioned in the note above.

[24] Also, this interpretation by itself would fail to explain why, if that were the only message Plato were trying to convey, he needed to postulate the complicated picture of different successive forward and reverse cycles, and not -more simply- just one moment of prevailing

far we have not proved that this story is not a cosmological digression in the dialogue, nor have we exhibited its relation with Plato's anthropology and political thought. I now wish to show that the disorderly cycles can be regarded not only as a symbol of *hypothetical* states of the world as a whole, but also as a cosmic projection of *actual* human and social disorder. So I pass on to examine the ethical and political importance of the myth and its relation both to cosmology and to the political context of the dialogue. It goes without saying that these different levels of analysis, far from being exclusive, are complementary to one another.

II. THE ANTHROPOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL MEANING OF THE MYTH

1. The exaggeration of the macro-microcosm parallelism

One of the most pervasive notions throughout the myth is that of a close parallelism between macro and microcosm. Thus, we have seen that all changes in the universe involve changes in us who dwell in it. For example, both the "development" and "reverse process" of human age follow the forward or backward motion of the universe respectively (cf. e.g. *Pol*. 270d-e, 271b7-8, 273e-274a). Likewise, the picture of opposite cosmic cycles serves Plato as a framework for views on palingenesis, which recall the argument of compensation of opposites to prove cyclical immortality in the *Phaedo* (cf. *anabiôskesthai* in *Pol*. 271b6-7, 272a1 and *Phaedo* 71e13-72a2). On the other hand, during the age of Cronus god has personal charge of the universe as well as of man; whereas in the era of Zeus, when the world becomes *autokratos*, so does man, with the subsequent need for political organization, which was absent under Cronus' herdsmanship (cf. *Pol*.

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disorder followed by prevailing order, as in the *Timaeus*. Cf. Mohr (1978).

271d-e, 273e-274d).[25] In sum, all of this shows how we "imitate and follow" the whole universe for all time (274a1, d6-7).

I daresay that this emphasis on the intimate relation between the human being and the cosmos makes Plato exaggerate the details of this parallelism, in a manner that contrasts with the differences he stresses in other late works (such as the *Philebus* and the *Timaeus*). This would explain why the world is so anthropomorphically described in the *Politicus*. Yet this exaggeration is not insignificant when we come to regard the cosmos not only as the stage but also as a symbol of human and political behaviour. To this I wish to turn, after recalling the overt political function that Plato states the myth to have. We shall then see how the concern of god in it can, at the same time, be taken as a model for the politician to follow, in a way that can show the cosmos itself as a projection of the *polis* or even individual human life.

2. *God as a model for politicians. The universe as a projection of the polis*

As we saw in our previous chapter, the political purpose of the myth is in fact the most evident one. Its explicit aim is to correct the first definition of politics (as the collective rearing or breeding of humans), the main flaw of which, the Stranger says, is to have mistaken the shepherd of the age of Cronus, who was a god, with the

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[25] To this effect, it is interesting to see how Plato has taken over and reconciled opposite views on the origins of civilization within the synthetical unity of an original story, by inscribing them in different cosmic periods: on the one hand, the old religious legends about the "fall" of man from an ideal state (age of Cronus) and, on the other hand, the modern theories of sophists and physicists about human "progress" from an initially defenceless condition (age of Zeus). Cf. Skemp (1952: 110).

politician of the present age, who is a man. We should therefore think of politics not in terms of breeding, but in terms of *human concern* for the world (cf. *Pol.* 274e-275a, 276c-d).[26] In other words, the function of nurturing humans (spoken of in the first definition) would at the very most belong to god as depicted in the ideal era of Cronus (when no political organization was needed but we were under the close care of regional gods) but not to a human being in the less ideal age of Zeus in which we live. In this way, the fictitious contraposition between two eras, those of Cronus and Zeus, becomes relevant to illustrate why we need politics in a more hostile universe where men are left more independent.[27] We live in a world where the fact that *Nous* has to coexist with *anankê* makes itself manifest in the need for humans to organize and take care of themselves, which would be an example of such limitation (cf. *anankazein* at 274c4).

However, the fact that politics cannot be *defined* in terms of a god-like close tending of human beings (like that depicted in the age of Cronus), does not mean that the latter cannot be taken, ideal as it is, as a paradigmatic *example* that human rulers should attempt to follow.[28] It is perhaps in this sense that the Stranger speaks of having introduced the myth in order to provide a *paradigm* for the king (277b3-5). In this way the ideal image of the age of Cronus would not be altogether

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[26] In addition, another mistake in the first definition was not to specify in what way the politician rules the whole *polis*, since many other men (such as peasants, grocers, doctors and gym trainers, 267e-268c) could claim that it is to them, much more than to the politician, that the function of breeding or nurture belongs (275a-b, 276b). This mistake, again, the Stranger says, could have been avoided by speaking of concern instead of rearing. Cf. 275c-276d.

[27] And it is in serving this political purpose that it becomes meaningful and necessary that Plato introduce the two different cycles of Cronus and Zeus. In this way we can provide an answer to the problem posed in note 24.

[28] Cf. Miller (1980: 51): "To be aware of what the god was in the age of Cronus is to know what man, within his limits as different from the god, must strive to be for himself in the age of Zeus".

deprived of political importance. This in turn accords, in its basic point, with a parallel passage in *Laws* IV (713c-714a), which also stresses the political moral of the myth of Cronus: During that age, in fact, we were governed not by men but by god or *daimones*, that is, more divine and superior beings who provided peace, good order and justice. God did what we do now with tame flocks: we do not have oxen ruling over oxen but we, who are a better race, ourselves take charge of them (cf. *Pol.* 271e7 for the same thought that man is *theioteron* than the other animals). In like manner, now *we ought to imitate* (*mimeisthai dein*, *Laws* 713e6) the life of Cronus and administer both our homes and our cities by following not what is mortal but all that is immortal within us, namely *nous* (for an immortal part of the soul in the *Pol.* cf. 309c). Coming back to the *Politicus*, we can thus see how god would represent a kind of ideal model for human leaders to imitate.

Now, even if it is true that the age of Cronus seems to be -usefully- fictitious in its ideal conditions for human life and in the notion that the kings and rulers of human congregations were gods so that there was no need for human rulers, it is certainly not fictitious in stating the guidance that god exerts on the overall universe. This, as we have seen, can be taken as a characteristic of god as such at any time -however he is mythologically described-, and the same applies to other functions that he performs in the myth and which will strikingly also belong to the true politician in the third and final definition of the statesman.

So, for example, both god and the scientific ruler have *nous* and *epimeleia* devoted to keeping order and to seeing to justice and to the happiness of the whole; both try to save the world or the *polis* from corruption, physical in the case of god, moral and physical in the case of the

statesman. Thus, god, as we have seen in the myth, has intelligent care of the universe (271d4), exerts *basileia* (269a7) and is responsible for its blessed qualities (269d7-9), by contrast with the *chalepa kai adika* that the universe increasingly undergoes without his guidance (273c-d); god preserves the universe from *diaphthoras kindunon* (273d3). Similarly, politics, in its normative definition, is declared to be superior to other arts in its care (*epimeleia*) of the human community (276b7-c1, cf. 305e3). It is an art belonging to the intelligent king (*phronimos basileus*, 292d6, cf. 294a8), a *sophos kai agathos anêr* (296e3), with unerring *nous*, who, by always administering justice, is able to save (*sôizein*) the *polis* and make it better (297a5-b3, cf. 293d8-9);[29] in other words, someone who, by possessing these qualities, can through his rule secure happiness in the city (301d1-6, cf. 311c5-6), by contrast with the evils (*kaka*) that "occur and will occur" in *poleis* which, by having no intelligent rule, are thus liable to destruction through ignorance (cf. 301e6-302b3; esp. 302a6-7: *diolluntai kai diolôlasi kai eti diolountai*; compare with the -cyclical-risk of the universe being *dialutheis* at 273d6).

In addition, the political *technê* tries to keep due measure and thus realize good and beautiful effects (284a-b), as much as god in the myth, in his guiding function, realizes order and beauty in the universe (273b6-7, e1-4). Even both god and the true politician bring opposites into harmony:[30] whereas god imposes order upon the limitless, or opposite bodily properties which left unchecked would plunge the universe into utter destruction (cf. 273d-e), the scientific ruler has to

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[29] Contrast with the bad government that exists when people rule who follow their basest desires (*epithumiôn*), which leaves no means of salvation (*sôtêrias mêchanê*) for the *polis* at *Laws* IV 714a (also *Pol.* 301b10-c4 with 302a5-b3), and compare this with the brink of dissolution that the universe reaches due to the governance of *sumphutos epithumia* (*Pol.* 272e6 with 273d3).

[30] Cf. Miller (1980: 109), though his comparison is drawn in rather different terms from mine.

weave the opposite characters of his collaborators within the society (309a8-b7). Both try to prevent or cure the "illnesses" that result from opposition (273e2-3, 307d ff.). Furthermore, as in the *Republic*, so in the *Politicus* Plato recurrently makes use of the similes of the pilot and his ship in portraying the ruler and his *polis* (*Pol*. 296e4-297a5, 297e8-12, 302a5-b3; cf. *Rep*. VI 487e ff., VIII 551c);[31] and these are the very same images he employs with regard to god and to the world in the myth (cf. *Pol*. 272e4-5, 273c2-e1).

Now, we must remember that the characteristics we have mentioned as belonging to the ruler are set as *normative* for him, and that the dialogue stresses that this kind of human *technê* is about the most difficult to acquire (*chalepôtatê*, 292d4), much as it constitutes the only true *politeia* -of which, furthermore, all the other ones are better or worse imitations (293e). In this way we can see further how god serves as a paradigm for any true

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[31] Likewise, in the *Republic* the philosopher-king has been called precisely a *dêmiourgos* of justice and all kinds of virtues in his fellow-citizens (cf. VI 500d). This analogy with the *Republic* stands in spite of all the explicit differences between these dialogues. These differences I take to include mainly: (i) the possibility that the true statesman need not necessarily be the ruler in charge of the society but could instead be his adviser (cf. *Pol*. 259a-b, 292e9-293a1); (ii) the insistence upon laws as a *deuteros plous* or "second best" in case we do not find in reality the ideal personality of the true statesman, described in the third definition (cf. *Pol*. 293e ff., 300c ff.). This second feature being more adjusted to facts, the *Politicus* comes closer to the doctrine developed in the *Laws*, though neither of these dialogues rules out the ideal notion of a gifted statesman whose superior skill would be capable of doing without legislation (cf. *Laws* IX 875c-d). Furthermore, Saunders has noted that in the *Politicus* the art of the statesman still relies on philosophical skill, since it is hard to see how he can "carry out his task of weaving" (cf. 311b-c) "without performing many 'divisions', notably of kinds of men and the offices they are to fill [311a]" (Saunders [1992: 485 n. 10]). This suggestion is strengthened by Plato's insistence that true politicians are *alêthôs epistêmonas kai ou dokountas monon* (293c7), and his assertion at 292d4 that the *politikê epistêmê* is the highest (*megistê*) and most difficult (*chalepôtatê*), (dialectic in turn having as its aim the highest objects -*megista*-, 285d4-286a7). For the association between philosophy and politics in the *Politicus* see also Diès (1935: LII-LVII, LIX). For a different view, see C. Gill (1979: 152).

politician (a paradigm which can therefore guide our political enquiry), as is already suggested by the assertion that the ideal kind of human government must be distinguished from all the other inferior ones "as a god from men" (303b4).

In addition, all the comparisons we have established serve to suggest that god's *nous* in the *Politicus* myth may -at a deeper level that does not dismiss the cosmological one- be a superhuman symbol, or a cosmic projection, of the ideal ruler, as much as the world may stand for the *polis* itself, which is prone to forget its leader's teachings and fall into total confusion *if and/or when* an intellect does not govern it (cf. 301c6-302b3). It is worth while insisting that in this case complete disorder is not just a hypothetical state of affairs (as above interpreted as regards the cosmos) but an *actual* risk or situation lived through by societies according to Plato (*ibidem*). The same stands if we analyse the myth from an individual point of view, apart from the political one. In fact, the *polis* embodies on a larger scale the same tendencies as human individual conduct (remember the correspondence between man and society in *Rep.* IV 434d-e, and cf. *Pol.* 307e-308a).

3. The universe as a symbol of human drama. God as a model for human beings

From this perspective we can understand why the world's behaviour and structure in the *Politicus* myth look so unusually anthropomorphic. In fact, when we read of the corporeal element in the world's constitution (*to sômatoeides*, 273b4) which causes it confusion and disorder (*thorubos kai tarachê*, 273a5) and even forgetfulness in the *Politicus* (*lêthê*, 273c6), what comes first to our mind is the exactly similar way in which

Plato speaks of *human sôma* in the *Phaedo* as a source of *thorubos kai tarachê* that prevents man from contemplating Ideas (66d6-7).[32] On the other hand, *to sômatoeides* in the *Politicus* is inherent in the world's "ancient nature" (*tês palai pote phuseôs,* 273b5); an expression that reminds us of a kindred passage in *Laws* III about the "ancient Titanic nature" (*palaian Titanikên phusin*) displayed by people out of self-control (701c2). Again, in the *Politicus* the universe has a *sumphutos epithumia* responsible for the reversal of revolution ending up on the brink of chaos (cf. 272e6 ff.; *hormê* 273a2); and, even though in this case *epithumia* may be interpreted just as "tendency",[33] we cannot help thinking of an "inborn desire" of the world which reminds us of human baser instincts, referred either to *sôma* or to the lower parts of the soul in Platonic writings (cf. e.g. *Phaedo* 66c, *Rep.* IV 439d, *Tim.* 70d-e, 88a8-b2). In any case, *sôma* (or *to sômatoeides*), *palaia phusis* and *epithumia* are opposed to *nous*, symbolized by the Demiurge and/or the World-Soul on a macrocosmic scale. In this guise, the world's behaviour in the *Politicus* would represent a conflict between reason and unreason, intelligence and bodily desire, and even remembrance and forgetfulness which in effect characterizes human nature.[34]

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[32] Cf. also *Phil.* 63d-e for the most intense pleasures -connected with the body- as provoking *tarachê, ameleia* and *lêthê* in human life.
[33] Cf. Brisson (1974: 486-7 n.9).
[34] In addition, the behaviour of the world as depicted in the reverse cycles shows striking resemblances with the behaviour of the human infant soul in the *Timaeus*. In the *Politicus* (273a-e), the reverse cycle starts with initial cosmic convulsion (*seismos,* 273a3), restoration of order for the very briefest period after the release, until everything starts going increasingly worse and the world becomes full of diseases (*nosêsanta,* 273e2) as memory of the teachings of the Demiurge grows dim (273b2-3, c6). Likewise, in the *Timaeus* (43a-44c), the infant soul starts having strong convulsions (cf. *seiousai,* 43d1) when it is implanted in a mortal body, then its revolutions settle down and the individual becomes *emphrôn,* but, if an adequate *paideia* is missing, the individual's rationality will deteriorate and he will return to Hades *anoêtos,* suffering *tên megistên noson* (44b-c).

In this way we can also see that the relation between the world and god in the *Politicus* is analogous to that between man and god in other dialogues. Thus, we find that the cosmos in the *Politicus* has the capacity to remember and to forget god's teachings (273b, c) -which probably consist in how the world ought to behave,[35] according to the pattern of Ideas. Thus god has a perfect rotatory motion (cf. *Pol.* 269e5) to be imitated by the universe.[36] And this is especially noteworthy seeing that in other dialogues it is conversely *man* that is liable to forget or to recollect Ideas (cf. e.g. *Phaedo* 72e ff., 76a-77a, *Phaedrus* 249b-c); or, even more, it is man that is liable to forget or to recollect (and imitate) god (cf. *Phaedrus* 252d-253c; and *Tim.* 41e1-2 with 47a, 47b-c, where the god is the universe itself)[37] which can in turn constitute an intermediate stage towards the knowledge of Ideas (as we have seen with regard to the *Timaeus*, e.g. 90b-d; cf. *supra*, chapter 3, section 2.2). From this standpoint, the relation of the world to the deity in the *Politicus* may be depicting man's attitude towards god and the importance of his remembering god's instructions.

Thus, all these comparisons between macro and microcosm in the *Politicus* and in the light of other dialogues

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[35] Cf. *Tim.* 36d4-7, 38e6 for the heavens learning their prescribed motion from the Demiurge.

[36] In *Pol.* 269d5-e6 Plato starts by suggesting, in a strongly axiological way, the immutability of the Ideas, and it would seem that it is by having this pattern in mind that he then treats -with a tone of regret- the lack of changelessness of the world (due to its participation in body), though the best it can achieve is circular motion. This, however, is depicted as liable to reversal, in contrast, again, with the perfect and unidirectional circular motion of god, which would therefore seem to stand as directly paradigmatic for the universe's own motion.

[37] Recollection of the cosmic god would be suggested in the *Timaeus* insofar as it it said at 41e2 that the Demiurge "showed the nature of the universe" (*tên tou pantos phusin edeixen*) to the human soul before its earthly existence, and at 47a7 it is again the nature of the universe (*tou pantos phusis*) that we can now investigate with the help of sight. Cf. Kucharschi (1966: 319 ff.).

serve to illustrate the anthropomorphical guise of the world in the myth, even though we have been led to acknowledge that the picture could hardly be taken literally as far as the whole universe is concerned. In point of fact, the *"cosmic drama"* referred to in that story stands for *"human drama"*, *i.e.* an *ethical conflict* which is in general absent from the world and prevalent in man, considered either individually or collectively.[38] If the cosmological foundations of the *Politicus* myth are as outlined above, we are right in saying that, in spite of the literary details, the universe (especially the heaven) is a pattern of order that human beings *ought* to imitate (cf. *Phil.* 29a-30a; *Tim.* 47b-c, 90d).[39] (And in this -ethical- sense the "imitation and following" of the universe by humans -*Pol.* 274d6-7- would be normative rather than descriptive.) So, whereas in the universe absolute chaos is just a hypothetical state, since *nous* always governs *anankê* for the most part, sheer disorder does exist in *human* life and may pervade the whole of it, and it depends on man to make *nous* rule or else be subdued by *anankê*. In other words, the world is what man and the *polis* ought to be. This too is the main difference between man and god: whereas *nous* defines god invariably and essentially, human rationality on the contrary is not something "given" but a task that remains to be achieved. Nothing could be more telling on this point than that passage in the *Politicus* where, after describing the advantages that people in the carefree age of Cronus delighted in, Plato queries whether these men were happier than those of the present era of Zeus or

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[38] In this regard, it wouldn't be surprising that Plato chooses to depict human situations at a macro-level which, by being placed at greater distance from the human observer, can be seen by him with more clarity (as was the case with the *polis* and the individual in *Rep.* IV) and, we could add in this case, a dreadful clarity: it shows how the whole cosmos would be if the same principles that can lead human behaviour to chaos were operating without restraint in the universe. In fact Plato is not far from suggesting the cosmic importance of human behaviour (including political behaviour, cf. *Laws* X 906a-c, esp. c5-6), as we shall see *infra*, ch. 7.

[39] Cf. *supra*, ch. 3, section 2.2; ch. 4 section 4.

not. Surprisingly, there is no categorical answer to this question, and by means of this Plato rejects the most salient feature of the Hesiodic Golden Age, namely happiness as something unquestionably enjoyed by the human race (cf. *Op*. 106 ff., esp. 115 ff.).[40] By contrast, Plato's answer in the *Politicus* is conditional: *If* the nurslings of Cronus made use of their leisure time and their ability to dialoguize for the sake of philosophy and the improvement of wisdom (*phronêsis*), then they were immensely happier than those of our age; otherwise they were not (cf. *Pol*. 272b-d). This is the same as to say that intelligence, philosophical life, and the happiness entailed by them, are not just a mere gift but a task or ethical challenge for man to undertake; a challenge which he cannot avoid even in the most idealized era of humanity.[41] Or rather, to put it in other words, that "Golden Age" onto which so many human beings project our happiness is not something lost but an inner capacity of ours, and it depends on our choice to fulfil it.[42]

III. CONCLUSION

In sum, even though my analysis of the cosmological bases of the myth has tended to deny any predominance of irrationality in the world as a whole and therefore the existence of alternating cosmic cycles (very far from what a literal interpretation would suggest), we can in any event understand the anthropomorphic picture of the world in the *Politicus* in the light of the ethical and political purpose of the myth. The world has appeared as the stage onto which Plato has projected human

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[40] Cf. Solmsen (1962: 185 ff.).

[41] The fact that Plato leaves the possibility of philosophy open during the era of Cronus goes against those who claim that philosophy could not exist during that cycle but only in ours, such as Scodel (1987: 79), Brisson (1992b) and Howland (1993: 26).

[42] Cf. *Rep*. X 617e4-5: *aitia helomenou·theos anaitios*.

disarrangements; although, strictly speaking, it cannot be but a pattern for human behaviour to follow. So, in the same way as *nous* reigns over the universe, it must also govern the microcosm if order is ever to exist in man and politics. In this way, we can see how the myth provides the macrocosmic background for ethics and a touchstone to seek the true definition of the statesman.

CHAPTER 7

SOUL, TELEOLOGY AND EVIL IN *LAWS* X[1]

The tenth book of the *Laws* has often been considered as presenting Plato's views on cosmology and theology in a more "exoteric" way in contrast with the more esoteric style of the *Timaeus*. And there are some indications that could support this view. Whereas the *Timaeus* mentions that to find the Creator of the universe "is difficult, and, having found it, it is impossible to communicate it to everyone" (28c3-5), Plato is in *Laws* X intending to establish a "proemium" (*prooimion*, 887a3, c1) or rational foundation for his laws against impiety, which are supposed to be known by all. In this proemium Plato has the Athenian Stranger argue for three propositions: (i) that the gods exist (887c-899d); (ii) that they take care of human affairs (899d-905d); (iii) that they cannot be bribed by sacrifices or prayers (905d-907b).[2] The underlying assumption is that learning these facts about the gods will also help to prevent impiety which, like any kind of vice, is often due to ignorance (885b, 886a-b).

Now, if this is so, what most surprises us is that Plato does not however have qualms about introducing in this apologetic discourse a reference to an evil soul as an alternative candidate to a good soul ruling over the universe, in the middle of an argument intended to demonstrate the existence of god (896e). This has provoked the most varied reactions, from Ancient Platonists attributing to Plato a dualism that would appear manichean to our eyes, to recent interpreters who

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[1] This chapter is based in outline on an earlier version published in *The Review of Metaphysics* 48 (December 1994), 275-98, under the title "Teleology and Evil in *Laws* X".

[2] The three propositions are summarized at 885b4-9 and 907b5-7. Cf. *Rep*. II 365d-e.

have denied that Plato is at all concerned with the World-Soul in the *Laws*. It has also been very much debated whether the general account of *Laws* X is consistent with the *Timaeus*. This requires us to examine the status of soul and its connection with evil in *Laws* X, against the background of Plato's cosmological account in earlier dialogues.

I shall try to show that *Laws* X is to be taken as an emphatic assertion of cosmic teleology -based on the supremacy of soul- which follows the spirit of the earlier dialogues and which involves an explicit rejection of any kind of evil Soul ruling over the whole cosmos. This rejection, however, does not do away with the existence of an "evil kind of soul", nor does it do away with the problem of evil in general, about which Plato seems to be worried probably more than ever, though, at the same time, he wishes more than ever to be convincing about the existence of teleology. In what follows I shall present his argument for the existence of god and show how the problem of evil arises within it. The discussion of evil will then take us further into an elucidation of its status and cause within a finalistic arrangement of the universe, and I shall argue that in *Laws* X it would appear that it is mainly human beings who are responsible for every sort of evil.

I. THE PRIORITY OF SOUL OVER BODY

Why does Plato need to "prove" that god exists? It is obvious that this need arises when god's existence is no longer evident or a matter of consensus, as it used to be (885e-886a), but has now been controverted by modern theories. It will no longer be sufficient to point to the "sun, moon, stars and earth as gods", because many people would say "that these things are earth and stones" and bulks of inanimate bodies (886d-e, cf. XII 967c). The

materialists responsible for this belief claim, according to Plato, the priority of body over soul (891c) and posit nature (*phusis*, 889a5, b2), chance (*tuchê, ibid.*) or chance by necessity (*tuchê ex anankês*, 889c1-2) as the main cause of everything: The random motion, collision and admixture of opposite properties of water, earth, fire and air -like hot-cold, wet-dry, soft-hard- gave rise to the heavenly bodies and the universe in general (889a-c). And all this, they contend, "not by intelligence... nor by any god or art but...by nature and chance" (*ou de dia noun...oude dia tina theon oude dia technên alla... phusei kai tuchêi*, 889c5-6).

It is these materialists, then, who provide the scientific support for atheism. Plato purports to attack them by conversely establishing the priority of soul over body. To *phusis* understood as chance and necessity he opposes his own principles, namely god and design (*technê*) and intellect (*nous*) as things akin to soul (889b-c, 892a-c). The latter, Plato wants to argue, should be prior as the first cause of generation and corruption of everything and, if by "nature" the materialists mean "the productive source associated with the first elements" (*genesin tên peri ta prôta*, 892c2-3), it should be soul (*psuchê*) and not fire or air that deserves to be first "by nature" (*phusei*) (892c3-7), since soul is the first source of all things (*prôtê genesis [pantôn]*, 896a6-8).[3]

Against this background, we see that it is vital for Plato to establish a connection between god and soul understood as purposive intelligence (cf. *technê* and *nous*). The struggle between theism and atheism becomes then a struggle between teleology and chance (or random

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[3] Note the connection between soul as *prôtê genesis* and soul as *aitia* of all change for all things at 896a-b. Similarly *phusis* can be understood as *natura naturans* -rather than as *natura naturata* -being therefore a synonym of *archê* -cf. *phusis* as an *ex hês* at 891c and England (1921: 26 *ad loc.*). See Naddaf (1992: 492, 500).

mechanism) as the key factor in explaining the universe. And proving the existence of god turns out to be equivalent to proving, first, the priority of soul to body, and, secondly, that soul in charge of the universe is intelligent and therefore good. This then is Plato's next task.

At 893b the Stranger starts his argument for this priority of soul over body with the following steps:
1. Of all things (*panta*), some are in motion, some are at rest (893b8-c1).
2. It is in a place (*en chorâi tini*) that the static things rest and the moving things move (893c1-2).
3. Among the things that move we can distinguish ten kinds of motion, the last two of which are two kinds of motion under which every other kind of motion falls:[4]
- "That motion which can move other things, but is unable to move itself" (894b8-9). This is to be understood not as another kind at the same level as the preceding eight, but as the way in which every kind of corporeal change takes place, that is as a mechanical series,[5] in which each member is "constantly moving another thing and being moved by something else" (894c3-4).
- "That motion which can always move itself and other things" by means of corporeal changes (894b9-c1).

The priority of self-motion over mechanical motion is asserted on the grounds that every chain of motion should stop at a first mover. This, by definition, cannot be the kind of motion that has in turn been moved by something

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[4] For motion Plato uses *kinêsis* or *metabolê* (cf. e.g. 894c3-4, 7, 894e4-895a3, 896b1) meaning not only locomotion but every kind of motion. The first eight may be summarized as follows: rotation, locomotion, division, mixture, increase, decrease, corruption and generation (893c-894a). For a detailed explanation of the different kinds of motion in the *Laws* and a comparison with the *Timaeus* see Skemp (1942: 100-7). Let us add that the account of the ten motions in the *Laws* should not be taken to contradict the six rectilinear motions that characterize *anankê* at *Tim.* 43b. For these could be included, in the scheme of the *Laws*, as different kinds of locomotion, according to their different directions.
[5] Cf. Moreau (1939: 62).

else (cf. 894e4-7). If we imagine, we are told, that everything were at rest, it would have to be self-motion that would appear first (895a6-b1). Thus, self-motion (*tên autên heautên kinousan [kinêsin]* 895b1) turns out to be the principle of all motion (*archê kinêseôn pasôn*, 895b3) and the *condition of possibility* of all the corporeal changes.[6] It is therefore the first (*prôtê*, 895b4) not only in the logical -and metaphysical- order but also in dignity (*presbutatê*, 895b5) and efficacy (*kratistê*, 895b6, *praktikê diapherontôs*, 894d2), whereas the motion that is moved by something else and in turn moves other things is secondary (*deutera*, 895b7).

The argument then proceeds to note that we attribute life to self-moving objects (895c), and gives to self-motion (*tên dunamenên autên hautên kinein kinêsin*, or *to heauto kinein*) the name of "soul" (*psuchê*) -the former being the definition (*logos*) of the latter- (896a1-4), while secondary motions are referred to "the motion of an inanimate body" (*sômatos apsuchou metabolê*) (896b7-8). Thus, soul, being self-motion, is the cause (*aitia*) or *archê kinêseôs* of everything, having priority over body and thereby ruling (*archousês*) over it *kata phusin* (896b-c, cf. 892a): As the very word *"archê"* conveys, the notion of being a principle seems here indissociable from that of having rule. Soul is, in the first place, the cause of its own psychic motions, such as "tempers, moods, wishes, reasonings, true opinions, concerns and

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[6] It is certainly an assumption of the argument that, even if we need to stop the regress in the explanation of motion at a first mover, it should be itself in motion (cf. 894e7-895a3) and not for example unmoved (as Aristotle will claim). But Plato seems to have his grounds for preferring motion, particularly after the problems raised in the *Parmenides* as to how the Ideas by themselves could have any influence or *dunamis* on the sensible world (cf. e.g. 133c-134a). Soul is evidently expected to have efficient power over the mutable (cf. its "efficacy" and "strength", 894d1-2; its "power" -*dunamis*- at 892a3); but how could this be so if it were itself immutable? Note that even Aristotle would seem to require the mediation of a first mover in motion between his first unmoved mover as final cause and other things: *kinei de hôs erômenon, kinoumenôi de talla kinei* (*Metaph.* XII 7, 1072b3-4).

memories" (896c9-d1). Consequently, it is the cause of every kind of secondary motion of the corporeal (894e-895a), which in turn gives rise to the sensible qualities of things (cf. 897a7-b1). If soul is prior to body, then the properties of soul (*ta psuchês*) will also be prior to those of the corporeal (*ta tou sômatos*), such as length, width, depth and strength (896c-d). Therefore, we might infer, *nous, technê* and *nomos,* which at 892a-b had been settled as akin to soul, should also be prior *phusei*.

As we can see, this account so far shows many points of contact with the *Timaeus*. The distinction between primary and secondary motion, referred to soul and body respectively, is parallel to that between primary and secondary causes in the *Timaeus* (46c-e; 68e-69a), as much as the rule of soul over body is affirmed in both (cf. *Tim.* 34b-c). Primary motion operates by making use of secondary motions in the *Laws* (cf. *kata* at 894b10 and *chrômenê* at 897b1), and there is a similar relation between primary and secondary causation in the *Timaeus* (68e, esp. *chrômenos* at e4). Even though the *Timaeus* does not explicitly say that the first kind of causes (*i.e.* souls) are self-movers, it seems to be implied by the context: secondary causes are those "which occur by other things being moved and in turn moving other things by necessity" (46e1-2), so that we can infer that primary causes are those which move themselves.[7]

The account of soul as self-motion is also parallel to that in the *Phaedrus* (245c-246a).[8] This definition of soul

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[7] Cf. *supra,* ch. 2, section 1.3.

[8] There would seem to be a *prima facie* incompatibility between the *Phaedrus* and the *Laws,* if we consider that, while being *archê kinêseôs* in both dialogues, soul is called ungenerated in the *Phaedrus* (*agenêton,* 245d3) and generated in *Laws* X (*genomenê,* 892a5, *gegenêmenê,* 892c4). However, this needn't be a contradiction if we take it that both things could be true of soul in different ways: even if the *Phaedrus* stresses that soul is *temporally* ungenerated, in the sense of having had no beginning in the past (cf. Brisson [1974: 336-7]), the *Laws* would be allowing that it can still be called "generated" insofar as it is constantly self-creating: The soul's definition consists in *self-motion* (so that if soul creates its own

was, as we saw, in the *Phaedrus* established in close connection to the body which is moved by soul. "All body... which itself from itself has motion from within, is animate, since this is precisely the nature of soul" (245e4-6); this in turn matches the further assertion that "all soul takes care of all the inanimate" (246b6). The consequences of this definition of soul as self-mover are therefore of utmost importance. As Skemp has remarked, "the passage seems to imply a close union of *psuchê* and *sôma*...In spite of what seems a sheer dichotomy ...it is clear that Plato thinks of the two as conjoined in reality".[9] The same results could be applied to the *Laws*, since, despite Plato's efforts to distinguish soul and body in order to make the former prior, it is from the very beginning established in universal terms (cf. premiss 2) that "whatever moves...moves in a place" (893c1-2); this will apply to every kind of motion, including the tenth, which is *psychic* motion. This means that the motion of soul takes place in space (*chôra*, cf. *Tim.* 52a8, d3).[10] Soul, though invisible (898d9-e2, cf. *Tim.* 36e6, 46d6), seems to make itself manifest in the body it moves; that is why Plato says in loose terms that "when we *see* a soul" in self-

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motion it creates itself) and it is the cause of motion of all things that "exist, have come to be, and will exist" (*tôn te ontôn kai gegonotôn kai esomenôn*, 896a7-8) among which we should then count not only bodies, but soul itself (cf. 894b9-10: soul can move *hautên aei kai hetera*). Otherwise it would be unintelligible to find soul described both as *gegonos* and at the same time as the "first cause of generation of all things" (*prôton geneseôs aition hapantôn*), as we do at 891e5-7. Note also the polemical value that talking of soul as generated first with regard to body, and therefore as having more dignity (*presbutatê*) than it (892a-b), might have in a context which, unlike the *Phaedrus*, is overtly devoted to opposing materialistic theories which conversely postulate bodies as born first, and soul as born in the second place (*Laws* X 891c). Cf. Vlastos (1939: 397). The merely hypothetical character of any temporal generation of soul as preceding that of body is highlighted at *Laws* 895a6-b1, in an argument where the postulation of an original state of rest without motion, as propounded by some, is considered *tolma* by Plato. *Pace* Vlastos (1964: 414); T.M. Robinson (1969: 251 ff.); Stalley (1983: 174).

[9] Skemp (1942: 6). Cf. also *supra*, Introd., section 2.

[10] And therefore, in the corporeal that fills in space, if one bears in mind *Tim.* 58a4-7 suggesting that there is no void.

moving -corporeal- objects, we say that they live (895c11-12). Soul also appears as "inhabiting" and "administering" a body (cf. 896d-e).[11]

II. THE EVIL SOUL: PROBLEMS OF INTERPRETATION

We have seen that the argument has so far (893b-896d) tried to prove the priority of soul over body as a priority of first motions over secondary motions, the former being the principle of the latter. However, this doesn't yet seem to be enough to prove the existence of god. For soul in itself is morally ambivalent, *i.e.* it can be good or bad, rational or irrational, whereas the notion of god requires that god's soul be purely rational and good.[12] The ethical ambivalence of soul is remarked upon in the next step of the argument, where it is presented as the "cause of the good and evil things, fair and foul, just and unjust and all the contraries, if we are to posit it as the cause of all" (896d5-8). At the same time, whereas the argument seems so far to have been speaking of soul in general, *qua* soul, a hint is subsequently made at the cosmic import of soul (as the

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[11] Certainly, Plato seems to leave the soul-body relation as regards the gods much more open at 898e-899a, where he allows for three possibilities, namely that the soul of the sun conducts it (*agei*, 898e5) (i) from inside the sun's body, as the human soul does with our body; (ii) from outside, by means of another body moving the sun's body by force; (iii) without a body but with some marvellous powers. We can suppose that the reason for leaving this question among others -cf. note 18- open is that to solve this problem is not crucial for his argument against atheism. However, Plato would seem here to be very puzzled about (iii) -cf. *dunameis huperballousas thaumati*, 899a3, and the concessive tone of *eith' hopôs eith' hopêi* at 899a9-, particularly after he has just been arguing that soul *agei* all things in heaven by making use (*chrômenê*) of the corporeal (896e8-9 with 897a4-b1). By contrast, (i) is supported by the parallelism between macro and microcosm established in the *Philebus* (29a-30a, esp. 30a3-7); cf. *Tim.* 30b4-5 for *psuchê en sômati*.

[12] As will be stated in *Laws* X 899b5-7, 900d2, 5-7, 901e1-902b3 and 902e8. For the same suggestion in other dialogues see *supra*, ch. 2, n. 52. For intellect as the cause of good effects, in turn understood in terms of order, cf. notes 19 and 20 below.

notion of god requires, cf. e.g. further at 902b8-9), by the suggestion that "soul, which administers and inhabits all things which are moved everywhere, also administers the heaven (*ouranos*)" (896d10-e2).

Now, it is at this stage that we have to face a difficulty arising from the previous arguments, for:
(i) on the one hand, soul is the principle of all contraries (including good and bad);
(ii) but, on the other hand, an incautious application of (i) could lead us to violate the principle of non-contradiction, which Plato had applied to causality at *Republic* IV 436b8-9: "It is evident that the same thing will not admit to produce or undergo contrary effects in the same sense, with respect to the same thing and at the same time."

How, then, can one thing such as soul be the cause of all the contraries at *Laws* 896d? The passage of the *Republic* already mentioned concluded that if we find that that happens, "we shall know that it was not the same one thing but more than one" (436b9-c1); and on this basis Plato proceeded to distinguish different parts, faculties or "kinds" (*eidê*, *genê*) within the individual soul (436c ff.). The principle settled in the *Republic* seems to be implicit in this discussion in the *Laws*, and an attempt to keep to it would justify the conclusion that it cannot be just one soul (or kind of soul) that is cause of all contraries, but it should be more than one (*pleious*, 896e4): "Let us postulate not less than two: the beneficient soul (*tes euergetidos*) and that which is capable of producing the opposite results (*tês tanantia dunamenês exergazesthai*, 896e5-6)," afterwards called "the evil soul" (*tên kakên*, 897d1).

Now, the cosmic import of soul seems again emphasized in the following passage, crucial for our discussion, which runs as follows:

"Soul leads all things in heaven and earth and sea by its own motions, the names of which are: wish, reflection, concern, counsel, opinion true or false, joy, grief, boldness, fear, hate, love, and whatever motions akin to these, or primary motions, take over the secondary motions of body and lead everything to increase and decrease and separation and combination, and to the things derived from these: heat and cold, heaviness and lightness, hardness and softness, whiteness and blackness, bitterness and sweetness, and all those things which soul makes use of, both when, having acquired reason which is always rightly god in the case of gods,[13] it leads all things rightly and happily, and when conversely, associated with unreason (*anoiâi sungenomenê*), it produces all the effects contrary to those" (896e8-897b4).

Several problems result from different interpretations that might be given of this text. I shall first present them before offering my own solution.

1. Is Laws 896e-897b speaking only of Soul at a cosmic level?

This reading could be suggested by the first lines stating that "soul leads all things in heaven and earth and sea", something that might recall the World-Soul to any reader of the *Timaeus*. But if so, we cannot help being struck by the way Plato presents it. As to the psychic motions here referred to, we find that soul can not only have right opinions but also false ones, and not only *nous* but also *anoia*. If Plato's intention is to show that the soul or souls at a cosmic level are gods, that

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[13] The first words of 897b2 present philological difficulties. We can read, amongst various possibilities, either "*theon orthôs theois*" (Burnet), or "*theion orthôs theos ousa*" (Diès [1956: *ad loc.*]), which would call soul rightly god when having acquired divine reason. My translation follows Burnet's reading, but I shall also be making reference to that of Diès.

attribution would conflict directly with god's features of rationality and goodness, which are however reaffirmed in an unqualified way later in *Laws* X (cf. e.g. 899b5-7, 900d2, 902e7-8). Let us also remember that in the *Timaeus* the World-Soul is essentially rational, having intellect and right opinions, but never false ones (see e.g. 36e, 37b-c), and the same rationality of the Cosmic Soul is affirmed in the *Philebus* (28d-e, 30a-d).

Some of the other psychic states mentioned here can also seem striking though are perhaps less problematic. For example, Plato had not in the *Timaeus* spoken of hate and love, though this could be understandable as predicated of more humanized gods ruling over the cosmos -like the Olympians-, who in the *Republic* (X 612e), according to Plato's purified version, are said to love the just and hate the unjust (cf. also here at 901a). Plato had already in the *Philebus* identified the World-Soul with the soul of "Zeus" (30c-d), so there should be no wonder if he is now thinking of the power/s ruling over the universe in similar terms. (Indeed Plato will further on call the latter "the gods who dwell in Olympus", 904e4.) "Fear" and "grief" and "joy" could be fitted into the same kind of anthropomorphic picture. The Demiurge feels joy in the *Timaeus* when perceiving the similarity of the copy with the model (37c7). In the *Politicus* we read that god becomes "worried" (*kêdomenos*) lest the world might fall into dissolution and destruction (273d5); at a further passage in *Laws* X Plato wonders whether we can compare god with peasants who await with "fear" the usual barren periods for the production of plants (906a2). There is on the other hand no need to explain states such as wish, reflection, concern, and counsel, which recurrently characterize the provident Demiurgic activity in the *Timaeus* (e.g. 29e-30b, 34a8, 75b8; cf. also *epimeleia* at *Pol.* 271d4). Now, even though these states of mind in the *Laws* could be explained as an anthropomorphic way of presenting god, or the ruling

soul/s of the universe, there still remains the difficulty about "false opinions" and, what is worse, the postulation at the end of an evil soul, or a soul invaded by folly.[14]

2. Is Laws 896e-897b speaking only of human soul?

The above picture seems to be so contradictory to Plato's view of the World-Soul and the souls of the heavenly bodies as completely rational in the *Timaeus* and *Philebus*, that this has led some interpreters to think that Plato is not speaking of a cosmic soul at all in this passage, but just of human individual souls.[15] On the one hand, it is certainly true that subrational or irrational affections (*pathêmata*) like love, fear, boldness, pleasure and pain correspond in the *Timaeus* to the mortal part of the human soul and result from the implantation of the immortal soul in mortal bodies (42a-b, 69c-d), and that false judgements have to do with the same fact (44a with 43a ff.). In addition, *anoia* is at *Tim*. 86b analysed as a disease of *human* soul, due to physiological disturbances, and at *Tim*. 92c the possibilities of *nous* or *anoia* determine the different transformations of *human being* into animal or viceversa. But, on the other hand, the main problem with this interpretation when applied to this passage of the *Laws* is that, if it were *just* human souls that Plato is speaking of here, it is hard to understand how he says of

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[14] False opinions can in fact be the cause of soul's misbehaviour. In the *Timaeus* (86b) Plato had treated *anoia* as a disease of the soul which has two kinds, namely madness (*mania*) and ignorance *(amathia)*. We can see how the evil soul in the *Laws* fits both descriptions, since it is said both to lack wisdom (897b8-c1) -and therefore be ignorant- and to produce crazy effects (cf. *manikôs*, 897d1). Also here, then, one could say that evil cannot lie but in lack of knowledge (which may be due to sheer ignorance, or to disorders ailing the soul, cf. also *Gorg*. 480b1, *Rep*. IV 444a-e, *Soph*. 227d-228e), and it is according to this knowledge or ignorance of truth that soul sets phenomena either in orderly or disorderly motion.

[15] Cf. e.g. Rist (1964: 107). This possibility is also considered by Grube (1980: 147).

them that only they "lead all things in heaven and earth and sea" (896e8-9) -or, as he will say afterwards (897b7-8), are "in charge of heaven and earth and the whole revolution."

Thus, on the face of it, neither of these interpretations of the passage under discussion seems to be convincing. However, I wish to argue that these are not the only possible ways of resolving the problem:

-As to the scope of "soul" at *Laws* 896e-897b, I shall try to show that it need not refer exclusively either to cosmic soul or human soul, but Plato may also be keeping the more general sense of *psuchê* as soul *qua* soul.

-As far as the ontological status of the evil soul is concerned, I shall point out that the text explicitly shows that there is *no* evil soul in charge of the whole universe, so that in this respect the latter is just a hypothesis which Plato postulates in order to reject, and this will be an important step in bringing to a close the argument for the existence of god which we have been considering. This however will not dismiss the existence of a kind of evil soul as such, which will require further investigation.

III. A POSSIBLE SOLUTION

1. The scope of soul at Laws 896e-897b

The fact rather seems to be that, in the passage starting at 896e8, Plato has certainly *fused* two senses in which he speaks of soul. On the one hand, he is keeping the general and abstract sense, *qua* soul,[16] in which he had

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[16] This view of the passage, restricted just to soul *qua* soul, is taken e.g. by Moreau (1939: 69), Solmsen (1942: 141), Cherniss (1954: 26, n. 29), also T.M. Robinson (1970: 148-51); though I think it is only partially correct, since Plato is adding here a second sense as

been speaking before, in the passage concerning the priority of soul over body, 894b-896d. This sense would *a fortiori* include *any* kind of *psychical* motion, like false opinion, *nous* or *anoia*. And, on the other hand, he is introducing "*psuchê*" as concretely referring to soul or the "kind of soul" (cf. *psuchês genos*, 897b7) ruling over the universe.[17] The latter can include not only the World-Soul but also the heavenly bodies, as Plato will later on suggest (898d).[18]

So, if we interpret this passage as transitional, and say that Plato is speaking both of soul in general and of soul at a cosmic level here, we need not incur either of the difficulties involved in the two partial views mentioned above, the one being that if the passage at 896e8-897b4 refers exclusively to the World-Soul, it

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I will now show. On the other hand, I do not think there is any allusion to the World-Soul before 896e -as is however claimed by Gaudin (1990: 178, 183)-, nor any identification of soul with reason or mind at 893c-896e, as supposed by Craig (1980: 8, 13).

[17] It is 896d10-e2 that marks the fusion, since Plato there suggests that soul should be considered not only as administering all things that are moved anywhere (which I take to be soul *qua* soul) but also the heaven (*ouranos*), thus giving "soul" a more specific connotation, suggesting the World-Soul.

[18] In fact, when Plato asks which "kind" of soul rules the universe (897b7), and further concludes that it is good soul, "either one or many" (*mian ê pleious*, 898c7-8, cf. *psuchê ê psuchai* 899b5), we could think at first sight that for him the question about the unity or multiplicity of souls ruling the universe is left open (as is claimed by the first four authors quoted in note 16). The reason for this may be that to decide the problem is not crucial for the point Plato is making in this kind of exoteric discourse, namely that the masses should believe in god, be it one or many. However, a careful reading of the text suggests that in fact *both* levels of divinity -the singular and the plural- are maintained here, and that he is thinking of both the World-Soul and the heavenly bodies, as in the *Timaeus* (without either excluding the Olympians as their traditional counterparts, cf. *Laws* 904e5). At 898d3-4 Plato will say with regard to the sun, moon and other stars, that *psuchê periagei panta kai hekaston;* in other words, that soul conducts the whole astronomical system (as a World-Soul) and each heavenly body individually, which should also have its own soul (cf. 898d9-10 on the soul of the sun). This would in turn be consistent with the question about what "kind of soul" rules over the universe, since both World-Soul and the soul of each heavenly body are shown in the *Timaeus* to be of the same "kind" or nature. Thus the *mian ê pleious* of 898c7-8 turns out to be a *mian kai pleious*. Cf. also Cornford (1937: 108), Festugière (1947: 21).

would be awkward to think of it as associated with *anoia* or having false opinion, the other one being that, if only human souls were meant, they could not be said to rule everything in the universe. The point rather seems to be that, when Plato speaks of false opinion or *anoia*, he is mentioning states of soul as such, and the question from here onwards will be to decide which state of soul, *nous* or *anoia*, prevails in the universe as a whole. In this way he will pass on to delimit the scope of soul to soul in charge of the universe, as we shall now see.

2. The status of a ruling evil soul at a cosmic level

In the next step of the argument (at 897b7-c1) the Stranger wonders: "Which of the two kinds of soul is in charge of heaven and earth and the whole revolution (*poteron psuchês genos enkrates ouranou kai gês kai pasês tês periodou*)? The one which is wise and full of virtue (*to phronimon kai aretês plêres*) or the one which lacks both things?". He does not give a direct answer, but poses a conditional alternative which appeals to the study of heavenly motions: *If* the whole route and motion of heaven and everything in it is akin to the motion, revolution and calculations of reason -that is, if it is regular (*kata tauta, hôsautôs*), in the same place, around the same point and in the same direction (*pros ta auta*), according to a single proportion and order (*logon kai taxin*) 898a8-b1-, then it is the best soul that leads and cares for the whole cosmos.[19] *If, conversely, the universe's motion is mad and disorderly* (manikôs kai ataktôs), *it is the evil soul.* (897c4-d1)

To this alternative the interlocutors agree that it would not be pious to say anything but that it is the soul

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[19] We can see that Plato thinks of good effects in terms of orderly effects. For the same connection between goodness and order cf. *Tim.* 87c, 29a, 29e-30a, 46e, *Phil.* 64e; *supra,* ch. 2, n. 9; ch. 4 section 5.3.

which is full of all virtue that drives the whole revolution of the universe (898c6-9). This conclusion in fact supposes a second premiss, namely that the motion of the universe is orderly. Though this premiss is only implicit here, it is explicitly posed as the basis of a similar kind of "physico-theological proof" both in the *Philebus* (28e-29a) and in *Laws* XII 966d-e, where the existence of a governing Intellect is inferred from the good order of the cosmos.[20] In the *Laws* it is astronomy in the light of its recent discoveries -which show for example that planets do not "wander" but follow a single regular track, cf. *Laws* VII 821a-822c, esp. 822a4-8- rather than superficial and commonsense arguments, which supports the belief in gods ordering the universe (cf. also XII 966d-967e).[21] This is how Plato can then reassert in *Laws* X that it is one or several souls[22] that are good in respect of every excellence and therefore gods, which conduct all the stars and cause years, months and seasons (899b). With this Plato concludes his demonstration of proposition (i) concerning the existence of the gods after having shown, first, the priority of soul over body, and secondly, that the kind of soul in charge of the universe is absolutely good.

From this perspective, what has the status of the "evil soul" proved to be so far? It is clear from the argument at 896d-898c that an evil kind of soul ruling over the cosmos was just a mere *hypothesis*, which Plato posed as an alternative to the good soul at the beginning but just in order to reject it. However, we should not think, with some interpreters,[23] that this is all we can say about the

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[20] In the latter text it is said that two things lead us to believe in the existence of the gods, first, the priority of soul over body and, secondly, "the order (*taxis*) of the motion of the stars and all the other things under the control of *nous* which has ordered everything" (966e2-4). We see here again an example of the recurrent suggestion that order is due to *nous* or to god, as we have seen *supra*, ch. 2., n. 37.

[21] Cf. Moreau (1939: 72, 76); *supra*, ch. 4, n. 31.

[22] See note 18.

[23] Cf. Festugière (1949: 125, 129-30) and Diès (1956: LXXVII).

evil soul at 896e-897b, for the argument does not dismiss the existence of "evil soul" as such. What the conclusion clearly shows is that it is not an evil soul (but an excellent kind of soul) that rules over the universe, taken as the whole *astronomical system* (cf. *ouranou periphora*, 898c3). In this respect, the crazy and disorderly motions referred to at 897d1 (cf. 898b5-8) would just depict how the universe would be *if* it were not god, or a good kind of soul, that guides it.[24]

IV. SOME ALTERNATIVE VIEWS ON THE EVIL SOUL AT A COSMIC LEVEL. THEIR IMPLAUSIBILITY

1. Successive cosmic rule of nous and anoia

However, it could still be argued that Plato has a view of the universe in which the ruling soul could *successively* exhibit *nous* or *anoia* in different cosmic cycles.[25] This would still be respecting the law of non-contradiction as applied to causality, since the same soul would be producing contrary effects -namely order and disorder- though at different times. But then, it could be said, the proof for the existence of god would just be valid during the orderly cycle in which we live, without discarding that in a different -disorderly- cycle the universe could be ruled by an evil soul. The picture of successive cosmic cycles, orderly and disorderly, had, as we have seen, been mythically presented by Plato in the *Politicus*. According to this picture, the *Laws* could be remitting to a single animic source both the orderly and disorderly cosmic motion described in the former dialogue; though in the preceding chapter I have already

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[24] Similarly, I have interpreted a-cosmic disorder as a *hypothesis* in the *Timaeus* and *Politicus*. Cf. *supra*, ch. 2, section 1.2; ch. 6, section 1.3.

[25] This reading could be suggested by the phrase *noun proslabousa...anoiâi sungenomenê* at 897b1-3, if we take the participles not only conditionally but temporally. This "cyclical" view was suggested to me by Prof. Conrado Eggers Lan.

argued against the notion of cosmic cycles as such in the myth of the *Politicus*. We could now add the problems that would result from applying a similar picture to the *Laws*. For if the ruling soul can pass from "acquiring" *nous* and being "god" (the latter feature being suggested by Dies' reading of 897b1-2, and confirmed in any event by the conclusion at 899b -cf. 898c) to being invaded by folly -which would imply not being god at that time-, then "god" would be just an accidental property of soul which comes into being and perishes according to soul's association with *nous* or *anoia* respectively, something that contradicts the very notion of god as immortal (cf. XII 967d). Let us also notice that the "cyclical" hypothesis would be equally implausible on a view which attempted to posit *nous* not as a faculty immanent to soul, but as a separate entity as god. For if *nous* is separate and has no intervention in the universe during periods of disorder -as a literal reading of *Pol.* 272e ff. would suggest- then this would contradict proposition (ii) in the *Laws* about god's essentially and always (905e2-3, 900d2-3) taking care of the whole universe.[26] So we must suppose that for Plato the universe is continuously ruled by a good soul or god.

Now, does this mean that there is no evil at all in the universe? Clearly not, for Plato recurrently goes on speaking of the existence of evil in the universe even after he has argued for the existence of the gods (903d-906c). But then, if we keep to the principle according to

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[26] In addition, at *Laws* X 901c-903a it is denied that the gods could fail to take care of the universe through laziness, ignorance or lack of power. The first two grounds were used by Proclus to deny that god could have started ordering the universe at one point in time and not earlier (cf. *In Tim.* I 288, 17-27 Diehl). The same evidence could be used against any postulation of cyclical states of the universe without divine care. Cf. also the arguments given below against the postulation of an irrational faculty in the World-Soul, which could apply also to this "cyclical" interpretation if we consider that the possibility that soul becomes associated with *nous* or *anoia* at different times could be explained by the fact that soul has an irrational faculty.

which an evil kind of soul is the cause of the bad effects in the universe (cf. 896d5-e6), we should admit that there exists an evil kind of soul. This kind of soul will not rule over the whole astronomical system -as the argument has just shown; that is why in that respect soul's association with *anoia* was just hypothetical. However, false opinion was categorically -and not merely hypothetically- postulated as a state of soul at 897a2. And we could say that both false opinion and irrationality become *actual* states of soul[27] when we come to explain the existence of evil that is still present, especially at the sublunar level, within an orderly universe ruled by god. What, then, is the status of this actual evil kind of soul?

2. Simultaneous cosmic interaction of nous with anoia

The issue can be explored further by distinguishing between moral evil, which, I shall argue, Plato thinks is caused by morally evil -human- souls, and natural evil, such as floods or droughts. It is the latter which is more difficult to explain, and not so intuitively ascribable to the agency of human beings. And perhaps for this reason some interpreters have remitted the cause of natural evil to some sort of soul at a cosmic -non-human- level, even though that cosmic cause, as we know, will not rule over the universe as a whole. However, I think that this view cannot be sustained in the context of the *Laws*; I shall present it and show its difficulties before offering my own interpretation concerning the problem of evil here.

That view could take at least two different forms -each of them answering to ambiguities in the text. And we could also here present them as different ways to solve

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[27] Here we can make use of the ambiguity of the participle in the phrase *anoiâi sungenomenê* at 897b3, which can be read both conditionally and temporally (cf. note 25).

the contradiction that, as we saw, would emerge if only one soul, at the same time and in the same respect, were the cause of all the contraries. We have seen that it cannot be the same soul producing good and evil at different times, but we could still think that:

2.1. We are dealing with *two distinct* -and coexisting- *souls*, the one good and the other one bad -as might be suggested by *Laws* 896e4 (*pleious*); or
2.2. it is *the same soul* that can be associated both with *nous* and with *anoia* (as the singular *psuchê* at *Laws* 896e8 might suggest), but *in different respects*. We could thus think that there are different faculties or parts within the World-Soul which produce contrary effects (as might be suggested by the term *genos* at 897b7).[28]

2.1. The first view, of two coexisting souls in the cosmos, producing good and bad effects respectively, was the view held in its strongest form by Plutarch in antiquity, and more moderately by some recent interpreters. The strongest view, as Plutarch put it, postulates two coexisting gods, the one good and the other one bad, competing for the governance of the universe and even sometimes alternating in its rule;[29] though this view seems already rejected by the arguments above, showing that Plato does believe the universe to be ruled only by a good soul and to be *continuously* -and not just cyclically- so. However, the notion of a cosmic battle could also be suggested by the striking passage, at *Laws* X 906a, where we read of an *athanatos machê*

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[28] Remember that the term *genos*, as well as *eidos*, is often used in the *Republic* for the different aspects or kinds (e.g. *eidê*, 437d3, 440e8, 9, *genos* 441a1-3, c6) within the one soul. The same terms are also used in the *Timaeus* for the different "parts" of the soul (e.g. *genos* 69d5, *eidos* 69c7, 89e4, 90a3).
[29] Cf. *De Iside et Osiride* 370b-371a. There he compares the evil soul with Ariman in Persian dualistic religion and with what the Greeks call "Hades". In *De an. proc.* 1014d-1015f he considers the evil soul as a soul of matter, though as the irrational precosmic principle from which God, by introducing intelligence, created the World-Soul. Cf. Cherniss (1976: 136-40).

between good and evil perpetually taking place in the universe, though, as I shall try to argue, in this case it is clearly *human beings* who are the protagonists of this drama. In addition, god is essentially good for Plato (see e.g. *Laws* X 899b5-7, 900d2, 901e1-2) and, in other dialogues, cosmic disorder in general tends to be ascribed not to the agency of god but to his absence (cf. *Tim.* 53a7-b4, *Pol.* 273c-e). Finally, let us remember that this kind of dualism is also rejected in the *Politicus* myth: "we should not say that... two different gods, with opposing designs, turn the universe" (269e8-270a2).[30]

We are then left with the milder view of the evil soul, according to which it cannot be said to be god or have equal power to the good soul, but rather act as a -mostly- subordinate animic principle of matter, which could yet sometimes produce undesirable effects.[31] However, I find this view difficult to sustain in the context of the *Laws*. For this interpretation would be endowing the universe with an internal principle of motion capable of producing evil effects, so that the universe would be the cause of good and bad in different respects. Yet Plato says that the universe itself is a god (*Laws* VII 821a)[32] and that god is only the cause of good, in an unqualified way (see again *Laws* X 899b5-7, 900d2). If this is so, it would seem that the universe cannot contain two principles at a cosmic level causing good and bad respectively but must only be the cause of good.

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[30] Cf. Festugière (1947: 12 ff.). *Pace* Jaeger's (1948: 132) claim that the evil soul in *Laws* X is a tribute that Plato pays to Zoroaster.

[31] Cf. e.g. Dodds (1965: 21), followed by Guthrie (1978: 97 n. 1). This possibility is also allowed by Grube (1980: 147 n.1).

[32] Cf. *ton megiston theon kai holon ton kosmon* at a2. I translate "the greatest god, namely, the whole universe", taking the *kai* as epexegetic, given that Plato is speaking here in an astronomical context and refers to the "sun and moon" as great gods (*megalôn theôn*) at 821b6, something that suggests that the greatest god is the whole universe. For the universe as *megistos theos* cf. also *Tim.* 92c7.

2.2. Now, some interpreters have also viewed the evil soul as an irrational faculty of the World-Soul, liable to unreasonable behaviour by which it brings about unwanted results. In that case it would be partition in the World-Soul,[33] similar to that in the human soul, that would account for the possibility of its being associated with either *nous* or *anoia*. However, this view is liable to the same kind of objection as above. For if it is the World-Soul (and, I should add, also the heavenly bodies, which share its same nature) which has different faculties and therefore is said to be the cause of good and bad but in different respects, then, again, we could not say of the whole of the World and the heavenly bodies, but only of their *nous*, that they are gods, since, as Plato repeatedly stresses in the *Laws*, gods are the cause only of good. And yet Plato *does* say explicitly in the *Laws* both that the whole universe -including therefore its whole soul- is a god (*Laws* VII 821a2, cf. also X 897b2 on Diès' reading), and that the heavenly bodies' souls, taken either individually or collectively, are gods (X 899a-b). So, given that the goodness of the gods lies in their rationality (cf. e.g. *Laws* X 900d), and that the gods are absolutely good,[34] the World-Soul and that of the heavenly bodies must be essentially and exclusively rational, without any irrational faculty.

Thus, none of these attempts to give evil a cosmic source seems to have been successful. In what follows, I shall try to argue that, in the context of the *Laws*, it is -

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[33] As suggested by Hackforth (1952: 75-6); cf. also Robin (1908: 164). I myself defended this view as an explanation of natural disorders within the orderly cosmos in "El problema del 'alma mala' en la última filosofía de Platón (*Leyes* X, 893d ss.)", *Revista de Filosofía* 3 (1988), 143-63, though I now find it more problematic.

[34] See in particular 900d5-9, where *sôphronein* is an essential part of virtue as belonging to the gods, and the opposite of *sôphronein* is part of evil; if this is so, such lack of self-control (as would occur if an inferior faculty of soul could sometimes become insubordinate) could never possibly befit the gods' nature. See also 902a6-b3, where it is denied that gods, while knowing what is best, could yield to pleasure and pain, as people say is the case with the least worthy of men.

only- human beings who seem to be responsible for evil, and I shall analyse its place within a finalistic arrangement of the cosmos.

V. HUMAN SOULS AS RESPONSIBLE FOR PARTIAL EVIL. THE TRIUMPH OF TELEOLOGY

We should then turn our attention to the section which follows Plato's argument for the existence of the gods, where he now purports to prove that they care for human affairs and cannot be bribed (899d-907b). There we find that the only kind of concrete evil souls which Plato speaks about are *human* souls (903d, 904a-e, 905d ff; cf. 899d-e, 900e with 902b4-5). In addition, he says that, whereas excellence (*aretê*) includes moderation (*sôphronein*), *nous* and courage, their opposites (*ta enantia*), e.g. cowardice -and, it would also follow, *aphrosunê* and *anoia*- belong to evil *(kakia*) (900d5-e2); and he adds with regard to these things that "whatever is bad (*phlaura*), belongs to us (*prosêkei hêmin*), if to anyone" (900e6). This is an important remark, and should make us think that the *anoia* mentioned at 897b3 as associated with soul, if it is present in the universe at all, belongs to human soul.[35] Of course it could *prima facie* seem striking that Plato would attribute *anoia* to human souls at 897b3, in a context where "soul" was said to govern or administer everything in the universe (896d10-897b4). However, Plato seems ready to allow that human souls have a share in the government of the universe (as is claimed for "soul" at 896e8) -though to a lesser degree than that of god. For we read further on at 903b-c that "the one who cares for the universe has arranged all things towards the preservation and excellence of the whole", the parts of which also have

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[35] Similarly, there is an allusion to folly (*aphrosunê*) as something that corrupts *us* at 906a7-8, as we shall see later.

rulers (*archontes*) of every action and passion even on the smallest scale (903b4-9). Amongst these rulers we can certainly read an allusion to lesser gods accompanying the main divinity (cf. *Pol.* 271d, 272e, *Tim.* 41a-d, 42d-e, *Phil.* 30d; and which in Plato's own cosmic religion could be the heavenly bodies ruled in turn by the World-Soul). But Plato clearly adds that "one of these portions [which have *archontes*] is also yours, and, however small, tends towards the whole and always looks to it" (903c1-2). Thus it would seem that human beings too are *archontes* of the small portions (*moria*) that are allotted to them in the universe, since they have causal responsibility (*aitia*) for the changes -whether good or evil- that they provoke (904b8-c2, c6-7 with 904b2-3).[36] Their souls could therefore be implicitly included in the scope of "soul" conducting the universe at 896e8, and in this way the government of their small portions -for example whole cities, families or their own lives- could turn out to be bad.[37]

I have said that Plato speaks only of human soul as a concrete source of evil. In point of fact, he tries to show how god has arranged everything so that goodness might prevail and evil be defeated in the whole (*nikôsan aretên, hêttômenên de kakian* 904b4-5). But it is clear that Plato is speaking here of evil in the context of human affairs (*anthrôpina pragmata,* 902b4), or of souls joined sometimes with one body, sometimes with another, which can be better or worse and, accordingly, achieve a better or worse destiny (903d3-8). It is whatever is bad in -our- soul that tends to harm (*blaptein*). And it is we

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[36] Let us remember, in the light of 896b-c, that the notion of soul's being an *archê* in the sense of *aitia* is inseparable from that of *archein* as ruling.

[37] The *pleious* of 896e4 would thus refer to 896d10-e2 as a conjunction. Although only one kind of soul (the good one) administers the heaven, human souls, including bad ones, are responsible for administering their part of *hapanta ta pantêi kinoumena*.

who have the *responsibility* (*aitia*) for good or bad behaviour, according to our will (*boulêsis*) (904b8-c2, c6-7), though the *consequences* of this behaviour are established "according to the order and law of destiny" (*kata tên tês heimarmenês taxin kai nomon*, c8-9; cf. 904c9 ff.), these laws having in turn been established by the gods (904e-905a, cf. *Tim*. 41e, 42d). These passages are useful in showing the relation of evil with teleology, and can be taken as a clue to distinguish two levels of ethical teleology (or teleology operating in the human sphere), which we may call individual and cosmic. Individual human behaviour oriented to the good depends, as we shall see, on the right use of our capacity intentionally to initiate causal chains (remember again *aitia* and *boulêsis* at 904c) -this good orientation being a task for us to achieve; whereas at the same time there is cosmic teleology as the given framework of cosmic justice for any kind of action. This system of cosmic justice, based on the principle of like to like, guarantees that, "*if* you become worse, you go towards worse souls, and, *if* you become better, you go towards better souls", so that "both in life and in every death you do and suffer what it is appropriate that like should do towards like" (904e5-905a1).[38]

In this respect, it is very interesting to see how, even though the allusion to god's concern for human affairs suggests his personal intervention, the actual achievement of cosmic justice is in fact much easier (903e3, 904a3) and so to speak "automatic".[39] As Friedlaender and Dodds have remarked, at the passage just mentioned (*Laws* X 904c-905a) reward or punishment are not so much parts of a myth as special cases of a universal law (namely that like should go with like). The law of

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[38] That the consequences of these conditional decrees for the destiny of human souls apply in *life* clearly shows that for Plato ethics does not necessarily depend on eschatology -though it doesn't exclude it either. For the same suggestion cf. *Gorg*. 470e9-11, 478d7-8, 527b-e, *Rep*. X 621c-d.

[39] On this point cf. Saunders (1973: 234, 237) and (1991: 204, 206).

cosmic justice turns out to be a law of "spiritual gravity", for every soul both in life and after death gravitates naturally towards the company of its own kind, and in this lies its punishment or reward.[40] This means giving a cosmic background to Plato's eschatological views and to his belief that the punishment for the wicked is having to live with the wicked (see also *Laws* V 728b), or that wrong-doing brings its own punishment (as we might infer from *Laws* X 899d-e, 905b-c).[41] In this respect, god controls the consequences of actions which have their cause (*aitia*) in our own soul.[42]

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[40] Plato says that our king "devised where each part should be placed so that goodness might win... in the whole" (904b4-5) and the places (*tinas topous,* 904b8) that souls of different sort should occupy; the more wicked they are, the lower they will fall until they reach the profundities of the places below the surface of the Earth (904c-d), whereas good souls go in the opposite direction to some other better place (904d-e). So we can see that the universe is topographically structured so as to provide a framework for eschatology; for a similar suggestion in the *Timaeus* see Osborne [1988: 104-9]).

[41] Cf. Friedlaender (1969: 438), Dodds (1951: 221) (who also quotes Plotinus -IV 3 24- as a development of this idea of cosmic justice, cf. 233 n. 76).

[42] I think god should still here be taken to be mainly the World-Soul, despite the fact that there are several *personal* allusions to god in this section of the *Laws* (899d-907b). For example, we are reminded of the Demiurge of the *Timaeus* when god is compared to those artisans who, the better they are, the more perfectly they realize both small and large things (902e), making the part for the sake of the whole and not viceversa (903c). God is also compared to a pilot (905e8), as in the *Politicus* (272e4). In addition, the god or gods who establish the conditional decrees of destiny are indifferently referred to in the plural as *theoi hoi Olumpon echousin,* giving them a traditional face (904e4), or in the singular, as our "king" (904a6, cf. *Phil.* 28c7) or as "the one who cares for the whole" (903b4-5, 904a3-4), or even as the "draughts-player" (903d6). But, despite all these "personal" allusions, it is clear that this god who takes care of the universe cannot be other than the god, *i.e.* the good soul (World-Soul or the souls of the heavenly bodies), whose existence and governance has been argued for previously, given that the three propositions which Plato is trying to prove in this book build on one another (cf. e.g. 900d, where the *epimeleia* of the gods for human affairs that needs to be demonstrated remits directly to their *epimeleia* for the macrocosm that has just been mentioned within the argument for the existence of god at 898c). In addition, having seen how "automatically" cosmic justice works, we can suppose that this (World) Soul in fact operates much more impersonally than the personal allusions suggest.

This emphasis on human responsibility is worth noting. In the preceding section (893b-899d) Plato had spoken of soul as the cause (*aitia*) of everything, both good and bad, and argued that it is the gods that are the cause of the goodness or order exhibited in the revolution of the universe. This we may call an argument for *natural* teleology, based on the regularity of the astronomical system, which is a given fact. Now, in the section beginning at 899d, when dealing with evil, the notion of *aitia* is again remitted to soul, specifically in the sense of *moral responsibility* (cf. 904b-d). Here Plato forcefully suggests that in the ethical domain it is a challenge for us to give to our lives a teleological orientation, contributing towards the goodness of the whole. We are encouraged to learn that whatever is good for the whole is also best for us, by virtue of our common origin (903d). Thus, teleology is shown to be present at every level, and soul is the agent responsible for its fulfilment: on the one hand, the soul of the god or gods at the natural -astronomical- level, and also at the ethical level with respect to cosmic justice, secures the teleological arrangement of the whole as something given; on the other hand, human souls at the ethical level are responsible for the task of giving a teleological orientation to the actions stemming from their own will. Plato's tone becomes quite dramatic at 906a2-b3, a passage which is most important in illuminating the problem of evil and its cosmic implications in *Laws* X:

"Since we have agreed among ourselves that the universe (*ouranos*) is full of many good things, but also of their opposites, and that there are more of those which are not good (*pleionôn de tôn mê*), such a battle, we say, is immortal (*machê...athanatos*) and requires an extraordinary vigilance; and the gods and daemons are our allies (*summachoi*), and we in turn the possession of gods and daemons. And what corrupts us (*phtheirei hêmas*) is

injustice (*adikia*) and arrogance (*hubris*) together with folly (*aphrosunê*); and what preserves us is justice (*dikaiosunê*) and moderation (*sôphrosunê*) together with wisdom (*phronêsis*), these residing in the ensouled powers of the gods, though one can see clearly a small portion also dwelling here in us."

Although the allusion to an immortal battle between good and evil taking place in the universe could again make us think of an evil cosmic soul, this possibility is immediately dismissed as soon as we realize that *we* are the protagonists of this battle, the gods and daemons being just our *summachoi* and only on the side of the good. From this perspective an extraordinary *phulakê* is a task that is now also remitted to us despite other passages stressing that the gods are *phulakes* (cf. 907a): it is clear that we and the gods must share this responsibility. Folly, injustice and arrogance are again left on our side. Plato's pessimism about the existence of more evils than goods in the universe is certainly astonishing, particularly within a kind of discourse which is devoted to emphasizing the existence and triumph of teleology. But we can notice here how Plato has come to view the *ouranos* more and more as the stage of *human* life,[43] and it can only be as regards the latter that he says that there are more evils than goods (as he had explicitly affirmed at *Rep*. II 379c).[44] This pessimism -

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[43] In a way that can remind us of a similar projection of human drama onto the cosmos as we interpreted with respect to the *Politicus* myth in chapter 6.

[44] Certainly, one could also read Plato's statement about the existence of more evils than goods in the universe as just making a point about the *numerosity* of evils. Evil human souls or their effects may be much greater in number than the good souls -including those of the gods- in the universe (after all we find more multiplicity in the earthly domain than in heaven), but this need not dismiss the fact that the latter have *predominance*, since "more evils" does not imply "more evil". For the numerous individual evils may each be small compared with the much fewer but much greater goods. However it is interesting that Plato does not mention *here* the predominance of good. Rather he stresses that between the forces of good and evil there is an immortal battle which is human-centered.

or rather, realism- is however only partial, for Plato has already shown above, again in martial terms, that god has arranged everything so that "goodness might win and evil be defeated in the whole" (904b4-5).[45]

Now, we have said that Plato speaks only of human souls as the source of evil. This however does not mean that the only kind of evil he speaks about is human, for he also speaks about natural evil in the terrestrial domain. Thus we go on reading at 906c2-6 that "the vice (*hamartêma*) just mentioned, namely overgaining (*pleonexian*), is what is called *illness* in bodies of flesh, *pestilence* in seasons and years, and *injustice*...in cities and states." What then is the cause of "pestilence in seasons and years and illness in bodies of flesh"?

This question about natural disorder could be answered by saying that it is an incidental random result of corporeal motions imparted by the purposive action of the World-Soul, and I think this explanation could arguably be given in the context of the *Timaeus*: Soul purposively moves one body, and this another body, until the purposive effect of soul starts waning and the corporeal begins to manifest random motion, which is no longer within the scope of Soul's initial purpose (cf. 58a-c,

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[45] As I said above, cosmic justice is one level of ethical teleology, and could be seen as a consolation for the just man who cannot stop the existence of evil in the universe (cf. 899d-e, 905b-c). This however should not lead us to inertia, but, on the contrary, should stimulate us to fight better on the side of the gods. For punishment is only a second best, both (i) from the point of view of the individual, whose wrong-doing is intrinsically bad as a disease, even if -in the best of cases- punishment makes him better, and (ii) from the point of view of the community, since we are told that a society of virtuous people is preferable to one which has to impose punishment on the wicked. (Cf. IX 854b-e with 853b-c.) In addition, knowledge of cosmic justice -as an aspect of cosmic teleology- could not but make us act virtuously and therefore fight for the good (cf. X 885b). But, even if we do not succeed, we have at least the consolation that we have done our best and that teleology after all prevails from the perspective of the whole.

46d-e).[46] In that case, Soul (even the good divine soul) would still be the *cause* of all motion, including disorderly motion as an incidental result which is not *meant* by it and for which it is therefore not *responsible,* in a way that would not affect god's goodness but, at the very most, stress the limitation with which he has to cope due to the nature of the corporeal. Plato had in fact in *Laws* IX (863e-864a) contemplated the distinction between causation of evil and moral responsibility for it: if, when an action is performed, the opinion for the best prevails, even if some harm is done the action thus performed must be said to be just (864a).[47] According to this passage there should, strictly speaking, be a distinction between a soul which is just but "capable of producing contrary effects" to the good ones and an "evil soul" as such. However, *Laws* X doesn't leave any room for such a distinction, since the two are plainly identified (cf. 896e6 and 897d1); and it is suggested that whatever is bad is due to a *bad kind of soul* (896d5-e6 with 897d1). So, if there are natural disorders or evils in the terrestrial realm, and if their ultimate source of motion is soul, then that soul should be evil at least in that respect (for it is the ultimate "cause" and hence "responsible"). Therefore the argument in *Laws* X seems to demand that the ultimate cause of evil be other than god or a completely good soul.

Now, why should Plato lead us to such a conclusion in the *Laws*? He does not focus on any cosmic source of disorder in *Laws* X, probably because he wants conversely to emphasize the pervasive presence and concern of the gods

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[46] For this interpretation of the *Timaeus* see Cherniss (1944: 444-5), applied to the *Laws* in (1954: 28-9 and n. 44); followed by Brisson (1974: 503-4). (For different explanations concerning the *Timaeus*, cf. Vlastos [1939: 394-8] -and in his line T.M. Robinson [1970: 95-7]; Easterling [1967: 31, 37-8]; Mohr [1985: 159-70, 184-8].)

[47] For the implications of this distinction in Plato's moral and penal theory cf. Roberts (1987: 23 ff.); Mackenzie (1981: 174-5, 245-9).

against atheism. So, we could explain Plato's silence about any cause of natural evil other than human by the kind of exoteric and protreptic discourse we are dealing with here,[48] which is meant to exalt the existence and providence of the gods -to an extent which may present them as rather more powerful than in the *Timaeus*-[49] and to make people aware that the goodness of the gods is such that only humans seem to be responsible for evil.

In this respect, even though Cherniss may be right in noting that evil seems to have not one, but several sources throughout the dialogues -and so he distinguishes between negative evil (due purely to the inevitable imperfection of the sensible world as a mere reflection of the Ideas), incidental evil (as the indirect result of the purposive action of soul) and positive evil, produced directly by morally responsible evil souls-[50] we should again note here that, at least as far as *Laws* X is concerned, the only explicit source of evil given is the last one. For we have seen that no room is left in the text for incidental evil and, on the other hand, in this discourse addressing the crowd no mention is made at all of Ideas of which the universe as a reflection could be an imperfect copy and in that respect convey negative evil.

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[48] On this feature of *Laws* X cf. Vlastos (1939: 392-3).

[49] It is in fact noteworthy that, whereas the *Timaeus* pointed out that *nous* guides (only) the majority of things (*ta pleista*) towards the best (48a3), here Plato says that god has arranged everything (*panta*) for the excellence of the whole (903b5) and emphasizes that it is easier for god, as for any demiurge, to care for the small parts than the large ones (902c-903a), thus suggesting that there is virtually nothing that is beyond his control. This has led scholars such as Mohr (1985: 185) to believe that, in contrast with the *Timaeus*, Plato's god in the *Laws* is omnipotent. This might be suggested by 901d7-8 ("the gods are capable of doing *everything* which is in the power of mortals and immortals"); though perhaps we are dealing here with a difference of stress rather than with a difference of thought. In fact we must not forget that the phrase at 901d7-8 does not itself suggest omnipotence, for the power of immortals might be limited in some ways (cf. *Laws* VII 818b).

[50] See Cherniss (1954), after him Brisson (1974: 449-52).

Conversely, Plato had already asserted that whatever is bad belongs to us (900e). According to this it appears that *we* should also have moral responsibility for what seems to be natural evil, and this would accord with the allusions to illness and pestilence as examples of *hamartêma* (vice) or *pleonexia* (overgaining) at 906c3-5, both words having a strong anthropological and moral implication,[51] which is in addition given here a cosmic import -in the context of a battle between good and evil taking place in the universe (906a-b). If this is so, Plato would then be stressing in the *Laws*, with overt ecological resonances,[52] the cosmic implications of human behaviour. Human disorder is thus seen to be a *pleonexia*, an overgaining or cosmic disturbance insofar as it trespasses the limits of the portion (*meros*, *merismon*, *morion*, 903b-c) established for each thing.[53] So we can see how human life has become more and more important as a part of the whole *ouranos*. In this regard there are some interesting conclusions to draw.

Moreau has proposed that, in contrast with the *Timaeus*, *Laws* X lacks the idea of an organized whole (*holon*), for it deals only with "all things" (*ta panta*, 895a, cf.

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[51] This is reinforced even more by the context, which takes *pleonexia* as a vice of unjust souls (906b; cf. *pleonektousin... en anthrôpois* at 906c1-2), and which tries to eradicate the notion that humans can *pleonektein* without suffering.

[52] Plato was in fact aware of environmental problems, such as the deforestation of Attica and the increasing non-absorption by the soil of rainfall there (*Crit.* 111c-d), in contrast with the ideal environmental conditions of a past Athens which was also excelling in virtue (*Crit.* 109c4-d2, 110e3-111a2, 111b-d, 112e2-6). (For the *Critias* as conveying a critique of Plato's contemporary society cf. Brisson [1992a: 324-5], with references to other interpreters who take it as a political allegory on p. 319.) See also Plato's description of the land in *Laws* V 740a5-7 as "our ancestral home of which we must take greater care than children do of their mother, since it is a god and so the mistress of mortal beings". This passage is quoted by Clark (1994: 118), and can be added to the evidence here against Hargrove (1989: 28-30) and Attfield (1994: 80), in their charge that Plato was a hindrance for the development of environmental ideas.

[53] Cf. Friedlaender (1969: 439).

896d-e).[54] This suggestive idea, though, could apply at the very most to the first section of *Laws* X,[55] which deals with the universe in general terms before introducing the role played by human beings in it (as happens from *Laws* 899d onwards). However, it is noteworthy that we do get the desired notion of the universe as a unified whole as soon as human beings are introduced into the description. Thus, we are said to be the possession of the gods, to whom also the whole universe (*ton ouranon holon*) belongs (902b8-9). In an eschatological context we read that the one who cares for the All (*tou pantos*) has arranged everything towards the preservation and excellence of the whole (*tou holou*, 903b4-6).[56] The happiness of the life (*bios*) of the universe as *to pan* is the aim (*hou heneka*) of every part and generation (903c-d); this indicating more than ever an organic whole. And we have earlier seen the *ouranos* as the battlefield of human good and evil (906a). All these things suggest that Plato does not seem to think of the universe as a complete whole unless we include human affairs as an essential part of it.[57]

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[54] Cf. Moreau (1939: 67).

[55] In fact even here there are references to the *ouranos* (e.g. 896e1, 899b8), though Moreau is right to say that *to holon* does not appear in this context.

[56] This immanent goodness of the whole sets the goal for soul as the agent of teleology (cf. also 904b4-5, 903d1-3, XII 966e-967a). This is not very different from the aim to which the Demiurge tends in the *Timaeus*, namely "that everything should be good, and nothing bad as far as possible" (30a2-3). In the *Timaeus* however this was understood in terms of similarity with the model (cf. 39d-e) and the notion of a unified organic whole was given its Ideal counterpart by positing the "Living Being Itself" (*ho estin zôion*, 39e8) which is perfect (*teleon*, 30c-d) as the model which guides the Demiurgic activity to produce just one visible world as a *zôion* (32d-33a). *Laws* X does not seem to make any explicit allusion to the Ideas -whether or not Plato still believes in them in the way they are presented in the *Timaeus*, it is clear that such metaphysically loaded claims are not needed for his point against atheism here, nor is knowledge of these entities required for the mass of citizens to live justly. However, despite these differences between esoteric and exoteric tone, we can discover both in the *Timaeus* and in *Laws* X the same effort to assert teleology by virtue of an intelligent cause.

[57] This does not mean that Plato does not conceive of the universe, *qua* astronomical system, as a unity (for he does at *Laws* VII 821a, for instance, as we have seen). But it does show that, having earlier

In the light of this, now it is not so surprising that Plato should say that there are more evils than goods in the universe, or that we are *archontes* in it. Neither should we be surprised at the importance of our cooperation with god for the fulfilment of teleology. For his conception of the universe or *kosmos* has proved to go hand in hand with anthropological concerns; and what Plato is showing to us in *Laws* X is that, in the end, cosmology gains full significance when seen in its interaction with human life. So, whatever we do is reflected in the cosmos and affects it, and in turn triggers its alloted cosmic consequences, which also affect us, though in a way that for Plato can be subsumed in an overall teleological design. From this standpoint, the purpose of doing cosmology or understanding the cosmos is to understand better our place in the cosmos. This is also the point, if any justification is needed, of our investigating Plato on cosmology.

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in book X focused on the universe as an astronomical system (897b-899b), Plato is now emphasizing that the human world must form part of any complete account of the World.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

We set out on a journey in our introduction that is now coming to an end. Through it, we have seen "mind" acting as a foundation of cosmic order in a twofold way.

1. Firstly, I have been concerned with its causal and teleological role in the late dialogues, and with its status as embodied mainly in the World-Soul, a theme that we have recurrently found to be present or implied in the dialogues studied, and particularly in the *Timaeus*. In this way, I hope to have given an interpretation which can make Plato's account both economical and explanatory. Economical, since I have tried to show that instead of needing two distinct entities, such as the Demiurge and the World-Soul in the *Timaeus*, with similar functions such as those of generating and sustaining order, we can understand the mythical functions of the former as embodied in the actual functions of the latter, an analysis that has in turn been supported by our examination of discursive cosmological passages in the *Philebus* and *Laws* X. This proposal has rested on a non-literal interpretation of creation of the cosmos out of chaos, and a picture of the universe has been shown to be preferable in which no total pre-cosmic or a-cosmic disorder might occur or threaten to occur (as I have argued as regards *Timaeus* and *Politicus* respectively).[1] Thus we do not need to postulate more than one kind of intelligent soul in the universe to see how primary causes operate to sustain it in order. Further, primary causes at a cosmic level correspond not to an ontologically different kind of item from intelligent soul but to intelligent soul itself; as we have seen from

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[1] Cf. ch. 2, section 1.2; ch. 6, section 1.

Phaedrus and *Laws*, the essence of soul consists in being the principle of motion, and -as I have also argued- of orderly motion insofar as soul is intelligent and purposive. In this way the World-Soul, containing within itself no irrationality, can be identified as the main cause which constantly generates and thus sustains -and governs- the orderly structure of the cosmos: this dual role of generation and ruling pertaining to the cause has been a constant throughout *Timaeus*, *Philebus*, *Politicus* and *Laws*.[2]

From an explanatory point of view, we can see how the postulation of an agent which can intend and realize goals provides at least a plausible representation of how teleology might work, particularly when the goal, as in the *Timaeus*, has its ultimate foundation in a separate realm of Ideas which do not seem to affect or be affected at all by the sensibles that bear their names (cf. *Tim.* 52a). If in the *Phaedo* participation in the Idea could itself count as a reason for a particular bearing the name of the Idea (cf. *Phaedo* 100c), now it seems that at the time of the *Timaeus* the relation between Ideas and sensibles is itself a problem, something that has to be explained rather than explain. A cosmic *Nous* is then, unlike the Ideas, *efficacious*. Its postulation does not need to do away with the Ideas (the *Timaeus* doesn't); it just serves to secure that the latter be properly instantiated in the sensible world. Now, whether or not one wants to grant that Ideas might prove to be relevant for the cosmologies of the *Philebus* and *Politicus* (as I have shown to be at least possible above),[3] and even though they certainly do not appear as entities superior to god and the world in the context of *Laws* X, we still have in all these dialogues the notion of an immanent goodness, beauty or symmetry pertaining to the whole which calls for *Nous* as its main agent. In the *Timaeus*

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[2] Cf. ch. 2, section 1.3. and 2.2.2.; ch. 4, section 3.4 and 5.1; ch. 6, section 1.2; ch. 7, section 1.

[3] Cf. ch. 4, section 5.3 and ch. 6, section 1.2.

similarity with the model, as the aim pursued by the agent, is understood in terms of goodness, implying beauty and measure providing unity, features that characterize a properly structured whole.[4] In the *Philebus* the cause (*nous*) guarantees the right communion with *peras*; *peras* in turn implies *summetria* between otherwise opposing elements, and *summetria* beauty and goodness.[5] In the *Politicus* too a true cosmos is characterized by cohesion between dissimilar elements grounding its beauty (273d-e, cf. 273b). And in the *Laws*, as we have seen, the universe appears as an intricate structure where all its parts interact towards securing the goodness of the whole (903b ff.). In this way the good state and cohesion of the universe can be constantly sustained by virtue of its being an organism endowed with exclusively intelligent Soul which can act perpetually as goal-oriented primary cause.

Now, in analysing the operation of this cause we have also seen how it has to face some limits: while, on the one hand, it is many times suggested that the teleological action of *Nous* cannot be fulfilled without relying on subservient factors, called co-causes or secondary causes in the *Timaeus* and secondary motions in the *Laws*,[6] both pertaining to the order of the corporeal, it has to cope with restrictions, often imposed by the very nature of the latter. In this way the necessary properties of the corporeal, not completely subdued by *nous*, could constitute a random residue of chance in the universe in the *Timaeus*;[7] we have found a similar relation between *apeiron* and chance in the *Philebus*[8] and also an ineradicable element of necessity amounting to the corporeal to be present in the reign of Zeus in the

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[4] Cf. ch. 2, esp. section 1.1.
[5] Cf. ch. 4, sections 3.2 and 5.3.
[6] Cf. ch. 2 section 1.3 and ch. 7, section 1. Cf. also ch. 4, section 5.1 with regard to the *Philebus*.
[7] Cf. ch. 2, section 1.3.
[8] Ch. 4, section 5.5.

Politicus.[9] But in all these cases, it can be said, *Nous* and therefore teleology prevails in the universe; and this is also, as I have argued in chapter 5, the case for the present universe in the *Politicus*. The same can be said of the *Laws*, where the stress is now put on human responsibility as a possible restrictive factor to overall cosmic teleology, at least insofar as Cosmic *Nous* can settle the consequences for our behaviour but never determine our behaviour itself, which has conversely its *aitia* in the *boulêseis* of each of our self-moving souls, which, by not being exclusively rational, constitute a potential source of order as well as disorder and therefore evil.[10] Now, we can see in *Laws* X that, despite the stress put on the importance of our watchfully fighting on the side of the good in the context of the whole *ouranos* (which would lose all meaning unless it is believed that what we do is not indifferent to cosmic teleology but matters to it), it seems that cosmic justice, as one aspect of teleology, will unfailingly prevail. But at least as far as *individual* ethical teleology is concerned, one must endeavour to act intelligently and virtuously and thus fulfil teleology as best one can; punishment is after all only a second best.[11]

At this point, then, we can see how the analysis of a Cosmic *Nous* in our search for the foundation of the world's order vitally requires us to take into account the place of human beings in the universe. Here macro and microcosm intersect.

2. For this reason, as a second aim of my thesis, I have tried to show how the cosmological speculation on Plato's

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[9] Ch. 5, section 2.7 and 3; cf. ch. 6, section 1.
[10] See the attribution of disorderly effects to an evil soul at *Laws* 897d1; *supra*, ch. 7, section 5. Compare *Tim.* 42e: The gods govern human soul "except insofar as it could turn out to be the cause (*aition*) of its own evils"; *supra*, ch. 2, n. 13.
[11] Cf. ch. 7, n. 45.

part is not an isolated feature which has no bearing on, and could in turn not possibly be affected by, Plato's interest in other areas, particularly the human sphere: conversely, in the *Politicus*, for example, the concern that god shows for the universe should be taken as a model for the politician to follow as regards the *polis* in order to guarantee its happiness;[12] similarly in the *Timaeus* and *Philebus* god, mainly the World-Soul, appears as paradigmatic for the human soul in its task of achieving happiness.[13] In addition, I have pointed out in chapter 3 how a demiurgic intellect, separate in the structure of reality of the *Timaeus*, is superfluous not only on metaphysical but also on ethical and epistemological grounds; it is the World-Soul, and not any separate *nous*, that will constitute the subject of astronomy through which human beings could attain happiness or even access to the Ideas; and it is also this kind of soul, and not any more remote *nous*, that Plato feels in a position to argue for in the *Philebus* and the *Laws*, as something that is within the reach of human knowledge and could thus influence human behaviour. Again in the *Laws* it is a kind of purposive soul that leads everything happily: this will be mainly Soul at a cosmic level, but also -as I have argued in chapter 7- human souls, who, by acting teleologically, will contribute to the happiness of the whole which in turn affects their own happiness (cf. X 903b-d).

In this respect I hope to have shown, through different strands of argument and pictures provided by different dialogues, that Cosmic Mind can not only act as a model for human minds -for whom it is rather an ethical task to attain order-, but also requires their cooperation for the achievement of teleology, thus showing the macro-microcosm relation to be so symbiotic that we are required not only to imitate but also to sustain the

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[12] Cf. ch. 6, section 2.2.
[13] Cf. ch. 3, section 2.2.; ch. 4, section 4.

universe's orderly structure. If god or the universe could clearly appear as paradigmatic for human behaviour in the *Timaeus* and *Philebus*, on the one hand, the *Politicus* and the *Laws* on the other, without dismissing the latter dimension, seem to disclose a new one: the universe as the stage of human life, whose very description can be coloured by ethical and political preoccupations. This can reach the point of depicting on a cosmic scale an ethical drama which seems rather inherently human, as in the *Politicus*, or appearing as the battlefield of human good and evil in the *Laws*,[14] with a consequent warning, one could infer, for human beings as regards the cosmos, since whatever we do is reflected in the cosmos and contributes towards its being orderly or not.

Let us note in addition that the symbiotic relation we have mentioned between macro and microcosm is possible, at least partly, because there is a difference of degree and not a gulf between god and men, as implied, both in *Timaeus* and *Philebus*, by the suggestion that our soul is of the same nature as that of the universe. One could on this basis press the matter further and say that the interest in the happiness of all human beings that Plato seems to show in these two dialogues might well have some metaphysical grounding in the fact that now all souls are described as having the same origin. Mankind from this perspective is seen as a whole, and even though finding an appropriate political framework for the development of human life continues to preoccupy Plato (a framework however whose ideal or second ideal conditions were far from being realized), as we can see from the *Politicus* and *Laws*, now the universe provides more clearly a wider background against which human beings can seek to understand their place.

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[14] Ch. 6, section 2; ch. 7, section 5.

Let me finish by recalling that this thesis has certainly focused on cosmology, since the answer required for the question: "What is the foundation of cosmic order in the late dialogues?" is for the most part a cosmological one; and it has been concerned with ethics just insofar as cosmology can act as a *background* to it. In the first regard, I hope to have shown through argument that it is possible to pursue a fairly coherent line in the investigation of Mind as a primary efficient cause of cosmic, teleological order, and that through its interaction with other factors in the cosmos the cosmologies of the four dialogues present themselves as extremely fertile. Thus, a coherent reading of these issues in the *Timaeus* and in the *Philebus* has proved possible not only separately but also comparatively to one another as to their basic points; and the cosmology of the *Philebus* has proved to be more weighty than if it were merely *ad hoc*. The importance of the cosmologies of the *Politicus* and the *Laws*, in turn, and following a spirit already exhibited in *Timaeus* and *Philebus*, has not only been maintained but shown to be inseparable from the ethical preoccupations if one is to make full sense of the cosmological picture itself -and only thus can we understand, e.g., why the world appears so anthropomorphic in the *Politicus*, or the emphasis on human responsibility in the picture of the *Laws*.[15] In this sense, far from pretending to have exhausted the topic, I hope to have at least offered fresh grounds for a more integrated investigation of the relation between cosmology and ethics in Plato.

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[15] Cf. ch. 6, section 2 and ch. 7, section 5.

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